Advice from YOU! Emoji Stickers 3 Quizzes!

American Girl™

November/December 2017

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Give! Pretty Gifts to make

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Follow Your Inner Star™

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Editorial Director
JODI GOLDBERG

loves baby penguins

Executive Editor
BARBARA E. STRETCHBERRY

favorite planet is Venus

Senior Editor
DARCIE JOHNSTON

Lifestyle Editor
ANDREA DEBBINK

Editor
MELISSA SEYMOUR

likes cozy socks

Associate Editor
CHRISSY STEPHENSON

Contributing Writer
KITSON JAZYNKA

loves cardinals

loves pecan pie

Manager of Creative
RILEY WILKINSON

Art Directors
GRETCHEN BECKER, DAN NORDSKOG

likes baby seals

Editorial Coordinator
JOLENE SCHULZ

Senior Production Manager
CYNTHIA STILES

Lead Production Artist
LISA BUNESCU

loves fuzzy slippers

likes banana cream pie

Marketing Manager
MELINDA MCCROCKLIN

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SUPER SISTERS!

When I first read about identical twin sisters who were reunited when they were 10 years old, I was amazed by their story. Turn to page 28 to meet Gracie and Audrey, who are so much alike even though they have grown up in two different families. They are sisters AND best friends!

There's so much to do in this issue—just in time for the holidays! Write to me at the address below and tell me what you think of this issue. I'd love to hear from you!

Barbara

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Write to Us!

BE SURE TO INCLUDE

- First and last name
- Address and phone number
- Birth date, including year
- School photo or other portrait
- Parent's signature

SNAIL MAIL

Send us a cool envelope! Print our address neatly on the front and your return address and the section of the magazine you're writing to on the back.

OR CONNECT WITH US ONLINE
PLAY.AMERICANGIRL.COM/PLAY/MAGAZINE



we can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon!



ENVELOPE ART BY
Katherine A.
Age 13, Massachusetts

Safety first!
Some of our projects and activities require an adult's help.
When you see this symbol, be sure to ask an adult to work with you.

Girls EXPRESS

FOR & BY GIRLS!

DECK THE HALLS

Looking for the perfect DIY gift? Create an ornament (or three!) to give to a friend. Use plastic or shatter-proof ornaments for these crafts.

Gumball Machine

Fill a clear plastic ornament ball with colorful mini pom-poms. Wrap a red ribbon around the top of the ornament and secure with glue. Let dry.

Owl

Cut out a heart-shaped piece of felt the size of the ornament for the head. Cut two big circles and two small circles out of felt for the eyes. Cut felt eyebrows and a felt nose. Arrange all the felt pieces for the owl's face and glue them in place. Then glue the owl's face to a plastic ornament ball, and let dry overnight.

Candy

Cover a plastic ornament ball with a piece of fabric. Gather the ends of the fabric on two sides, and tie with ribbon to create a candy shape.

Styling: Melissa Seymour

AG POLL



Answer these questions to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

Which craft would you like to create for your room?

- **30%** A canvas to hang on your wall
- **28%** A garland to hang above your bed
- **21%** A sign for your door
- **21%** A pencil jar for your desk

How do you relax?



- **34%** Read a book
- **29%** Listen to music
- **21%** Watch your favorite show
- **16%** Snuggle with a pet

Which part of your room is always messy?

- **36%** The floor
- **23%** Your dresser
- **21%** Your closet
- **20%** Your desk



SHINING STAR



We collected so many socks!

When nine-year old Miracle O. learned that sometimes homeless people don't have enough protection for their feet, she wanted to do something to help. "I don't want homeless people to have cold feet," she says. "I want them to feel safe and warm."

She and her dad decided to collect socks. "New socks are comforting and clean," she says. "And they keep your feet warm." Miracle asked her friends Madison and Mackenzie to help her decorate collection boxes. She hoped to collect about 250 pairs of socks. But after six weeks, people had donated more than 700 pairs of new socks!

There were fuzzy socks, super-soft socks, athletic socks, and some with polka dots and stripes.

Handing out socks with her parents in a park near her home was the best part. "I think lots of homeless people felt good because we were helping take care of them," Miracle says. "I loved seeing their happy faces. They were very excited and said the socks were a blessing."

You can Shine, too!

Ask a parent if you can reach out to your local homeless shelter. Ask what items are needed and start a collection!





Madison, Mackenzie, and I spoke about our fund-raiser on the radio!

MINI Quiz

Which winter critter matches your personality?

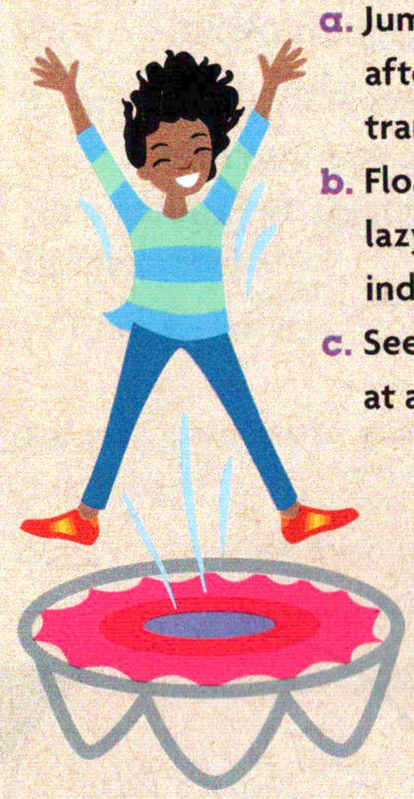
1. Your friend is having a bad day at school. How do you cheer her up?

a. Do a silly dance to make her laugh.
b. Surprise her with a cupcake from the school cafeteria.
c. Offer to help her with the homework she's been struggling with.



2. How would you spend a dream day with your best friend?

a. Jumping all afternoon at a trampoline park
b. Floating down a lazy river at an indoor water park
c. Seeing a live musical at a fancy theater





3. What's your favorite kind of movie?

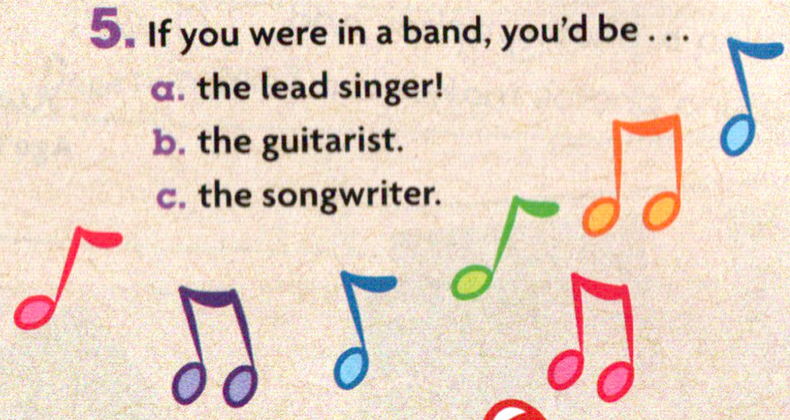
a. One with lots of adventure
b. One with a sweet friendship story
c. One that really makes you think

4. Which holiday cookie would you choose?



5. If you were in a band, you'd be . . .

a. the lead singer!
b. the guitarist.
c. the songwriter.



Answers



Mostly a's
REINDEER
You're silly and fun and have lots of energy!



Mostly b's
NARWHAL
You're kind, generous, and always thinking of others.



Mostly c's
ARCTIC FOX
You're curious and wise and love to learn new things.

Cold Cocoa

Frozen treats aren't just for summer! Sip this chocolate smoothie while snuggled up next to a warm fire.

Add 1 cup of vanilla almond milk, 1 packet of hot cocoa mix, 3 scoops of vanilla frozen yogurt, and 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract to a blender. Ask an adult to blend until smooth. Stir with a candy cane, top with some mini marshmallows, and enjoy with a friend!



Illustrations: Tracey Wood



True Story

Juanita took pictures of celebrities on the red carpet!



When I was five, I had cancer. My family learned about a foundation that provides classes to teach photography to kids with cancer. I learned how to hold a camera, focus a shot, and click the shutter. I also learned how to take pictures in different kinds of lighting. Taking pictures made me forget about being sick for a while.

At first, most of my pictures were of my little dog, Charlie. Sometimes I'd take pictures of him sleeping or just being cute. I also love taking pictures of flowers and grass and nature. I even photographed a little mouse once.

When I got invited to be a photographer on the red carpet of a big awards show in Los Angeles, I took pictures of famous people. It was so exciting! Some of the celebrities even took selfies with me. It felt great.

Being a photographer and taking photos makes me feel happy. Now I want to share what I have learned with other kids who get sick. I can't wait to pass on everything I've learned about photography and make other kids feel great, too.

Juanita H.
Age 9, California

AG ART GALLERY

Howl cute are these wolf drawings?

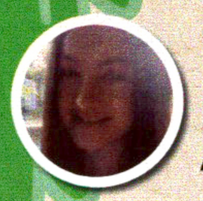
HELP US FILL OUR GALLERY!

Send color copies of original artwork or photos to the address on page 2. Sorry, we can't return entries.

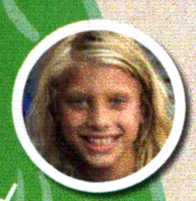








Ella A.
Age 12, Maine



Jane G.
Age 8, Wisconsin



Lydia P.
Age 11, Florida

Meet a Reader's Pet

Mia and Lea are best buds.

To find out how your pet can be featured, go to

americangirl.com/play/magazine

What's your pet's name?

Merlea, or Lea for short.

Describe the day you got your pet.

After my dance class, we drove to the store and bought her, along with a cage, some toys, and food. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

How would you describe your pet in three words?

Funny, cute, and colorful.

Do you celebrate your pet's birthday?

Yes. We make her a tiny cake out of her favorite foods—birdseed, noodles, and corn.

Does your pet know any tricks?

She knows how to say "peek-a-bird" and "be good."

Describe a time your pet was really smart.

Her cage is set up behind a small wall of blinds. She figured out how to climb them!

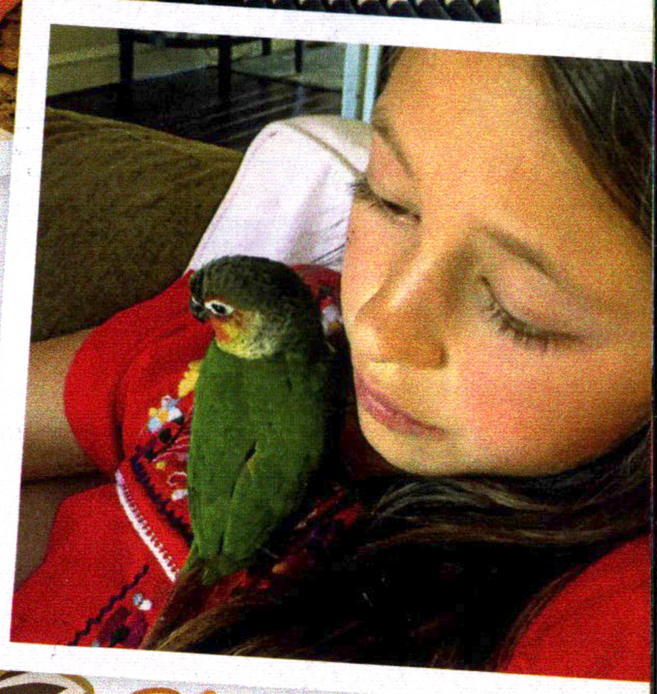
Mia H.
Age 11, Texas







Lea loves to follow me EVERYWHERE! She's a green-cheeked conure!



Contest

SWEATERS



Glow It Up

Breonna C.
Age 11, New York



Skate Great



Evelyn R.
Age 10, Virginia



Sweet Sweater



Mikayla N.
Age 11, Kansas



Unicorn Universe



KARI R.
Age 11, Illinois

Winter is the coolest—and so are these sweaters designed by our readers!

Cocoa Cozy



Indigo C.
Age 11, Connecticut



Purr-fect Fur



Josie W.
Age 8, Kentucky



Jolly Gingerbread



OLIVIA B.
Age 12, Massachusetts

Macho Mustache



Millie C.
Age 11, California



New Contest:

BRILLIANT BIRDHOUSE

This contest is for the birds! Draw a decorative birdhouse that would make your feathered friend as proud as a peacock to call home-tweet-home. Will it be a cute coop or an awesome owlery? Maybe a nifty nest box or a songbird's sparkling sanctuary? We can't wait to see! To send us your one-of-a-kind design, follow the instructions on page 2.

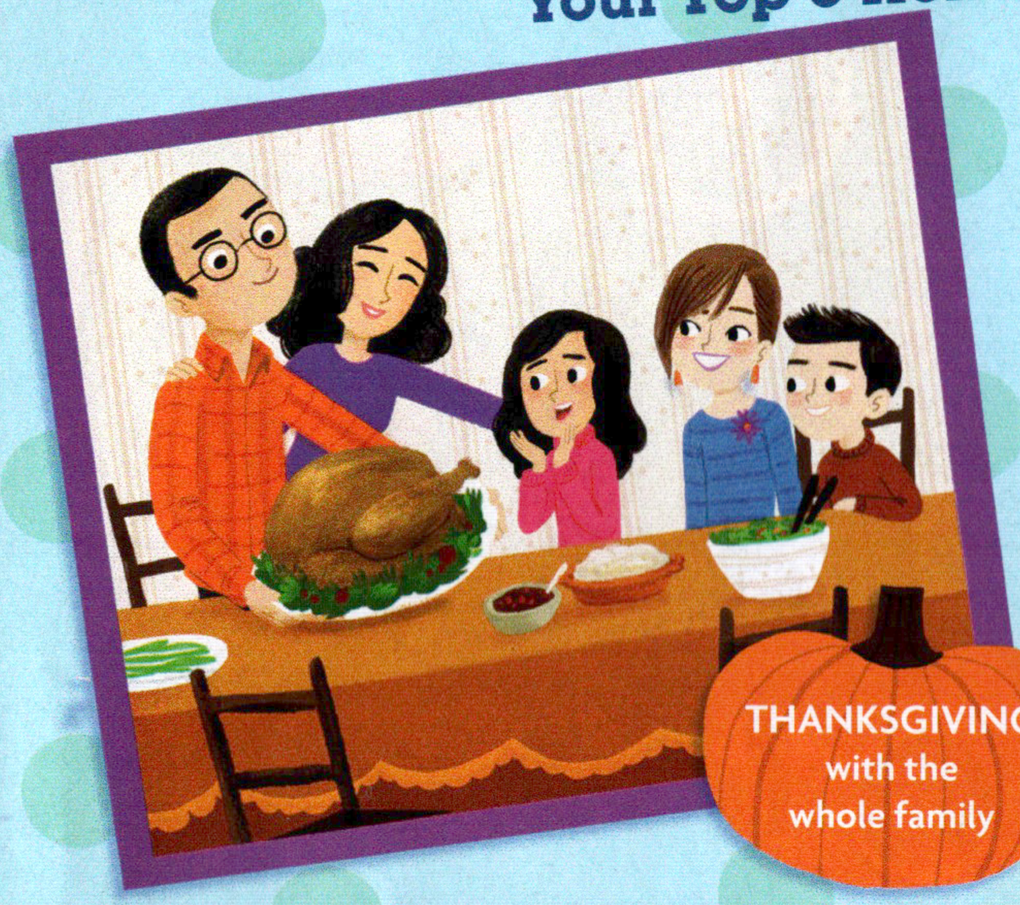
Postmark deadline: December 10, 2017. Winning entries will appear in the May/June 2018 issue. Sorry—we can't return entries. ★

Illustrations: Karly Jade Catto

Holidays

Our readers celebrate many holidays in lots of different ways!

Your Top 5 Holidays of the Season



THANKSGIVING with the whole family



HANUKKAH with Mom at Uncle Aaron's



CHRISTMAS at my friend Brynn's



KWANZAA celebration with my friend Jana



NEW YEAR! with BFFs Brynn and Jana



Do you decorate your bedroom for the holidays?

* 57% Yes
* 43% No

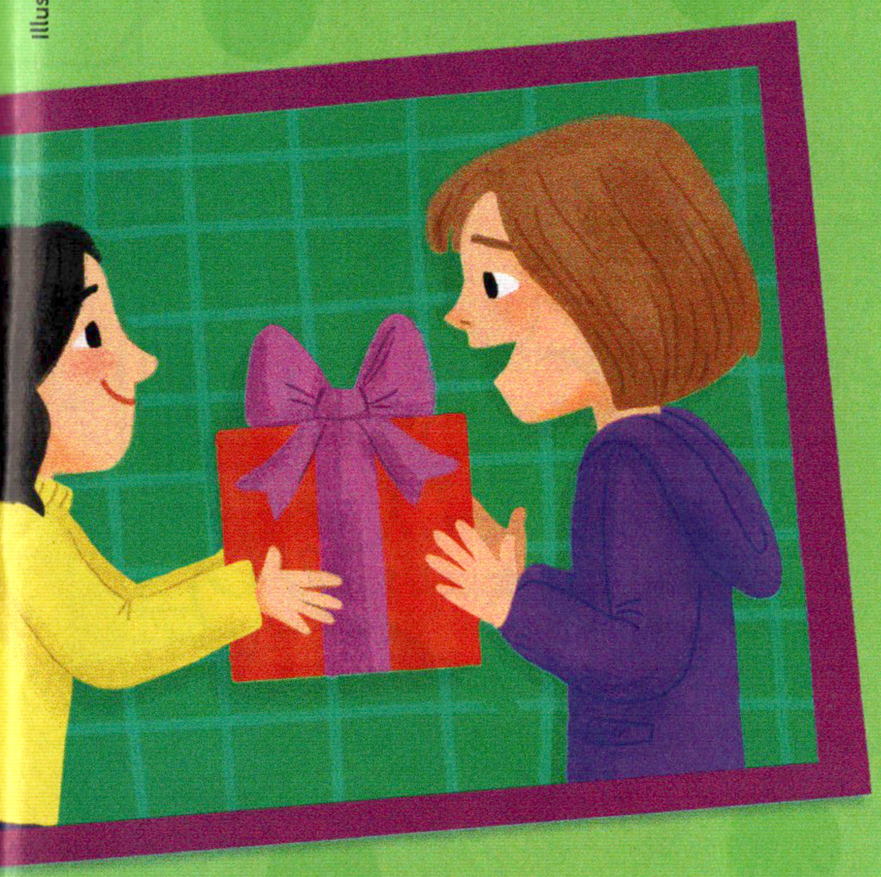
Twinkle lights OR tinsel?

* 88% Twinkle lights
* 12% Tinsel



You most often spend your holidays with

* 41% Lots of family—immediate and extended!
* 37% A mix of family and friends
* 22% Just immediate family



"Decorations" and "Holiday Cheer"

top your list of what's best about the holidays. But you also love getting to spend time with your family!

Girls like you love to give gifts—but you think getting gifts is pretty great, too!

* 61% Giving gifts
* 39% Getting gifts

Illustrations: Paige Pooler

Coming Up: HEALTHY HABITS

1. **What is your best healthy habit?**
   a. Drink plenty of water
   b. Get a good amount of sleep
   c. Eat healthy foods
   d. Keep active
   e. Talk about your feelings
   f. Take great care of your skin, hair, and teeth
2. **Name one new healthy habit you'd like to make.**
3. **Name one habit you'd like to break.**
4. **What's your favorite way to sort out your feelings?**
   a. Talk to a parent or grandparent
   b. Talk to a trusted adult
   c. Talk to an older sibling or cousin
   d. Talk to a friend
   e. Write about your feelings in a journal
5. **Snack time!** Fruits & veggies OR cheese & nuts?
6. **How do you most like to stay active?**
   a. Dance
   b. Go for a walk
   c. Ride a bike
   d. Play a sport
   e. Swim
   f. Do yoga
7. **Draw a picture of your favorite healthy snack.**

Send your answers to the address on page 2. Please include your first and last name, address, school or portrait-style photo, and birth date. Postmark deadline: December 10, 2017. Some of your answers will appear in the May/June 2018 issue. ★

According to Aggie™

Venus Has Vanished

Created by
Mary Richards Beaumont, Dan Nordskog
& Genevieve Kote

... so my title is "Earth's Neighborhood."

And what about the poster?

The poster is gonna be a map of the park with marks for where the planets would be if they were balls.

Yep!

Cool. So I'm the sun, and you'll put the other balls the right distance away?

Want to do the math first?

Nope—I'll put 'em out now so I can get an idea, and then get the measurements just right after dinner.

Mercury!

Are you sure that's far enough?

It's fine!

Venus!

It's farther!

FARRRRTHERRRR!

I think it's far enough!

HEY! Cut it out, Cashews!

I need a new Venus.

Actually, you need a new PLAN.

We can't do this project with balls, and it won't fit in the park.

"If the sun were the size of a beach ball, Mercury would be the size of a pin head, and Venus, a popcorn kernel."

Jupiter could be a tennis ball, but you'll have to go over to Birch Street probably to put it in the right spot. And don't even get me started on Neptune—we'd have to drive.

Your guesses for where to place the first planets were spot-on, though. My bad.

Tell you what ... let's go heat some water to 100 degrees Celsius and test its effect on unleavened wheat dough.

Huh?

Spaghetti!

Don't miss my next misadventure:

NAPPY NEW YEAR



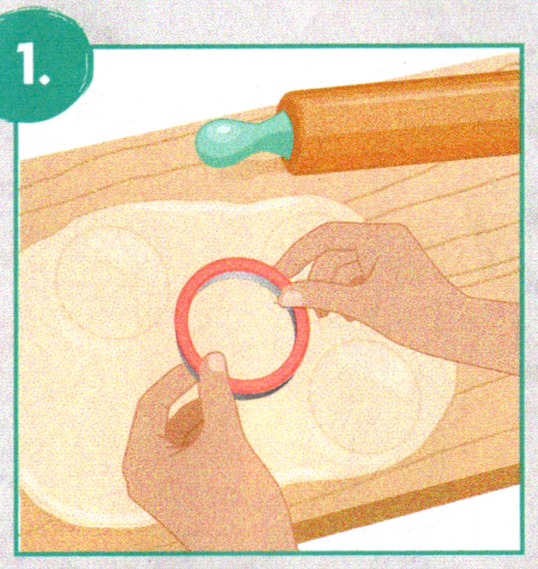
SWEETIE PIES

Bake some mini pies for a holiday treat!

YOU WILL NEED

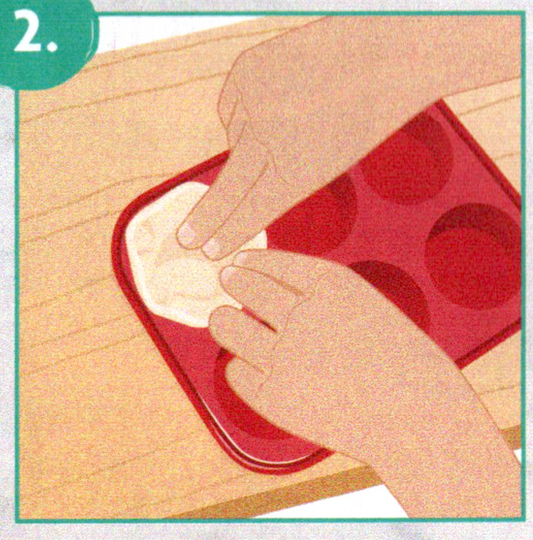
- ☐ 2 tablespoons flour
- ☐ 1 (14.1-ounce) package refrigerated pie crusts (2 crusts)
- ☐ Cooking spray
- ☐ Pie filling (See recipes)

1.



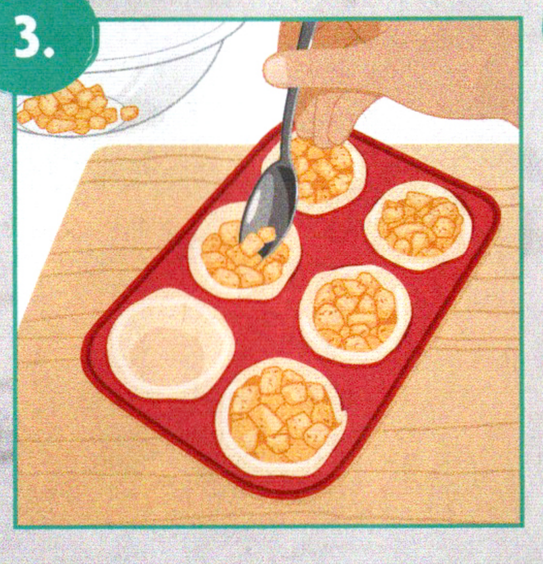
Scatter flour on a cutting board. Unroll one pie crust, and use a rolling pin to flatten it a bit more. Use a 4-inch round cookie cutter to cut out circles. Repeat with the other pie crust until you have 12 circles of dough.

2.



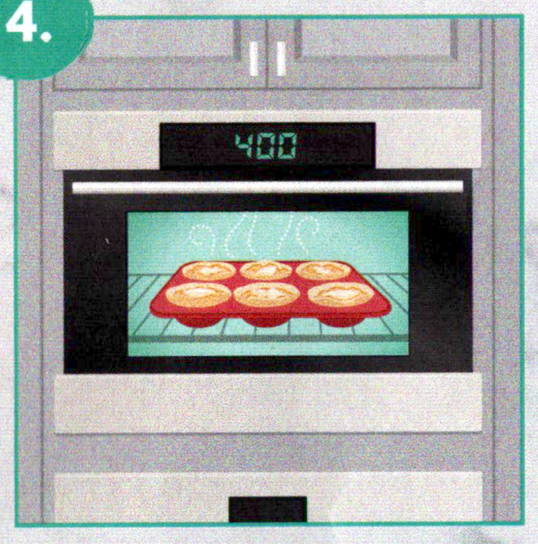
Grease a muffin pan with cooking spray. Place each circle in the muffin pan, and gently press the dough against the bottoms and sides. (Use two pans if needed.)

3.



Fill each cup with pie filling. Use cookie cutters to cut out tiny shapes from the leftover pie crust. Place one or two shapes on top of each pie.

4.



Ask an adult to bake the pies in a preheated 400-degree oven for 25–30 minutes. Let cool before removing from pan.

Illustrations: Monika Roe Styling: Stef Endres, Jolene Schulz, Khloe Sweeney





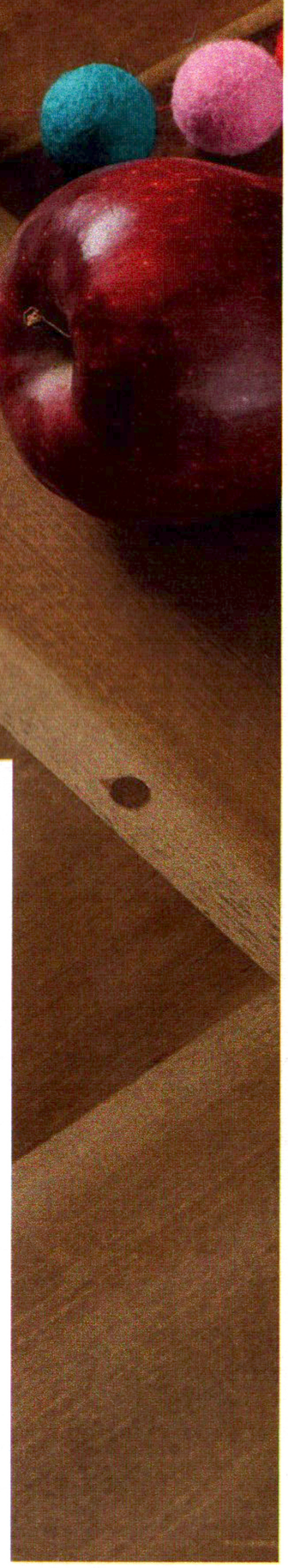




CARAMEL APPLE

Ask an adult to peel and dice 2 cups of apples. Mix together the diced apples, 1 tablespoon granulated sugar, 2 teaspoons cinnamon, and 3 tablespoons flour. Spoon 2 tablespoons of filling into each pie crust. Drizzle caramel on top, and add pie crust decoration.





CINNAMON PUMPKIN

In a mixing bowl, stir together 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree, 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk, 2 eggs, ¾ cup granulated sugar, and 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice until well mixed. Spoon 2–3 tablespoons of filling into each pie crust, and add pie crust decoration.



CHOCOLATE BROWNIE

Pour 1 (18-ounce) package brownie mix in a mixing bowl. Follow the package directions to make a batch of batter. Use 1–2 tablespoons of batter for each pie. Top with pie crust shapes. ★

Quiz

MORE DECOR!

Take this quiz to discover your winter decorating style.

1. Which dessert looks most delicious?

a.

b.

c.

2. How would you paint your nails for a holiday party?

a.



b.

c.

3. Which gift would you open first?

a.



b.

c.

4. Which sled do you like best?

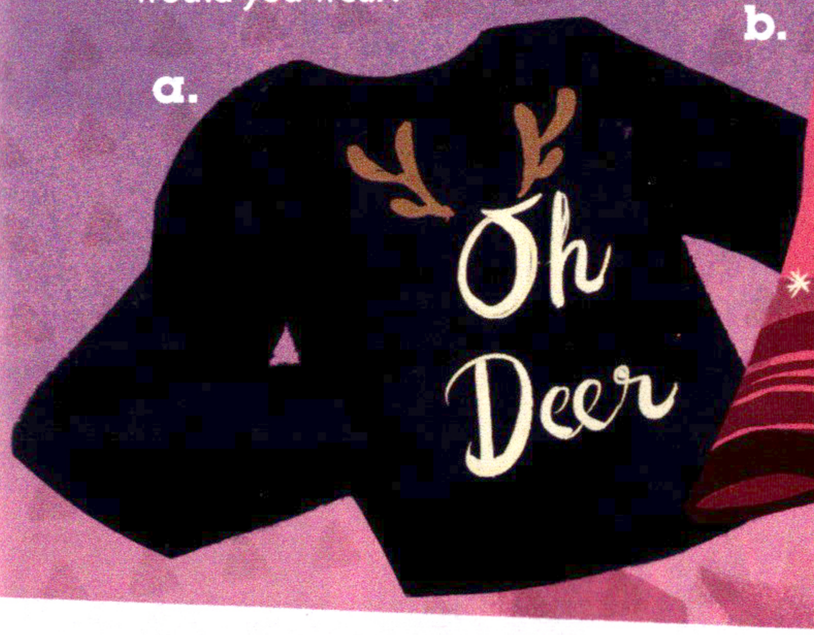
a.

b.

c.

5. Which winter sweater would you wear?

a.



b.



c.



6. Which blanket would you like to snuggle up in?

a.

b.

c.

7. Which slippers would you like to wear?

a.

b.

c.

8. Which mug would you like to sip hot cocoa out of?

a.



b.



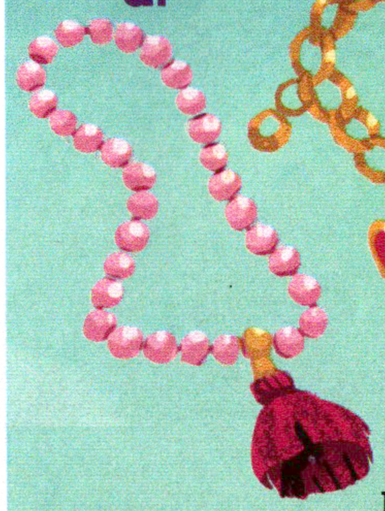
c.



Illustrations: Maike Plenzke

9. Which piece of jewelry speaks to you?

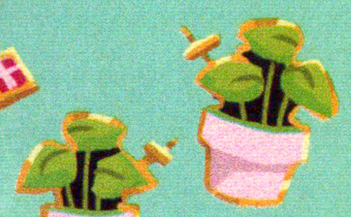
a.



b.



c.



MOSTLY A'S:
THE BRIGHTER THE BETTER

Your style is full of color and as bright as can be. You like decorations that are cute, fun, and sometimes silly.

MOSTLY B'S
CLASSIC AND COZY

Your decorating style is simple and beautiful. You tend to like things that are classic and timeless—especially while decorating for the holiday season.

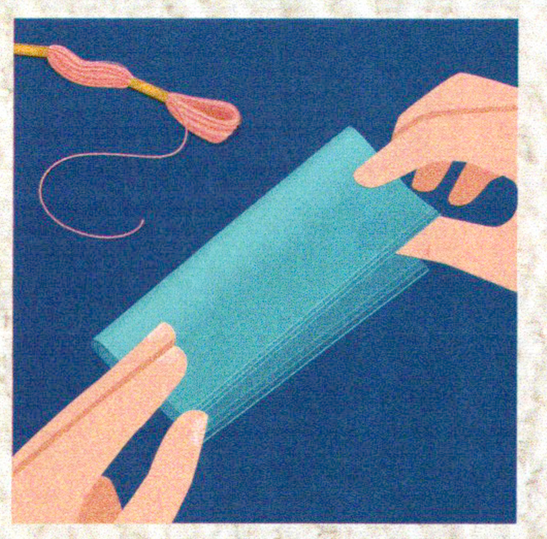
MOSTLY C'S
DREAM ON

You have a whimsical, quirky style and love anything that feels original. You like walking into a room that feels a little magical.

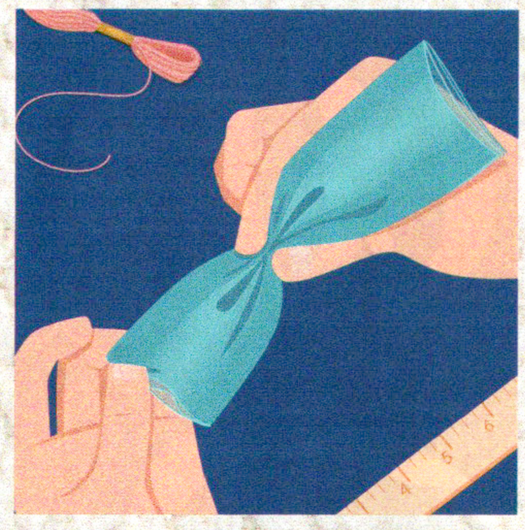
It's Bow Time

Handmade bows are perfect for presents—or festive crafts!

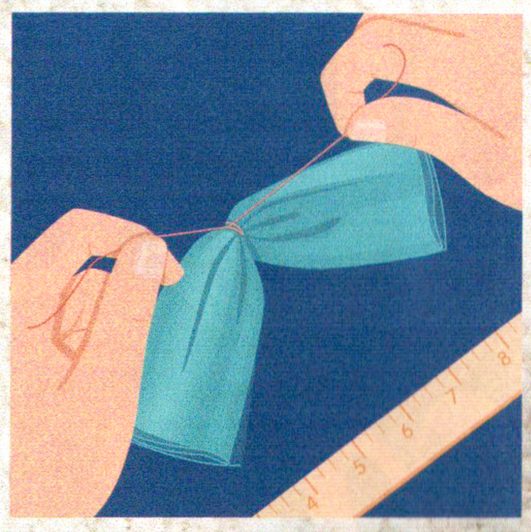
Butterfly Bow



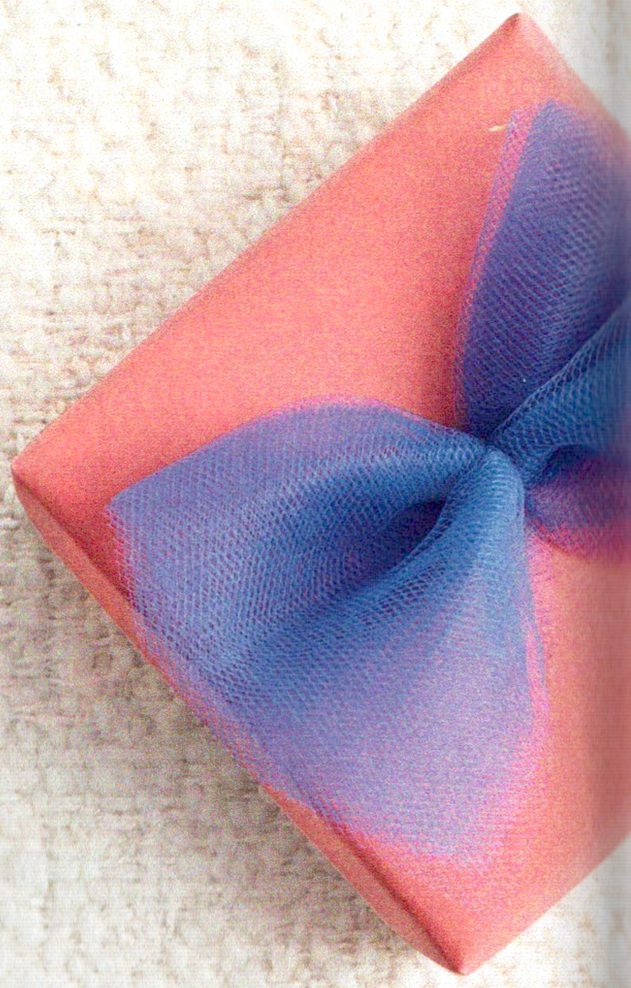
1. Cut a 4-inch piece of embroidery floss and set aside. Then stack three 6-inch squares of tulle, and fold the stack in half.



2. Fold the tulle squares in half a second time and pinch them in the middle.



3. Tie the embroidery floss in a double knot around the pinched part of the tulle. Trim excess floss and the ends of the bow.







Top a Gift

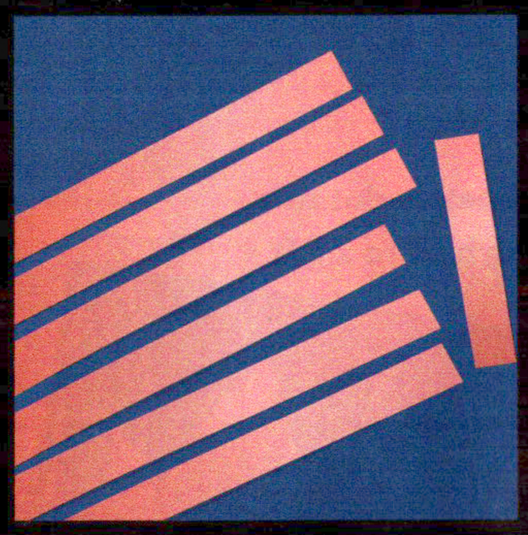
Use an adhesive dot to attach the bow to a gift.

OR

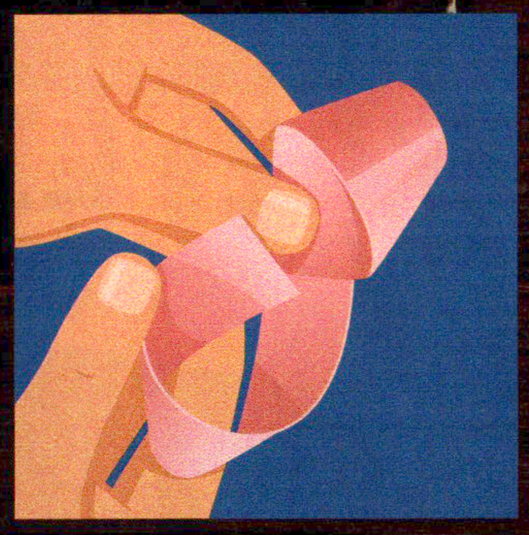
Make a Craft

Cut a piece of thread that matches the height of your window. Thread a needle and push the needle through the center of a butterfly bow. Continue stringing bows on the thread until it's full, spacing them out as you go. Make enough strings to cover your window. Ask an adult to help you hang them.

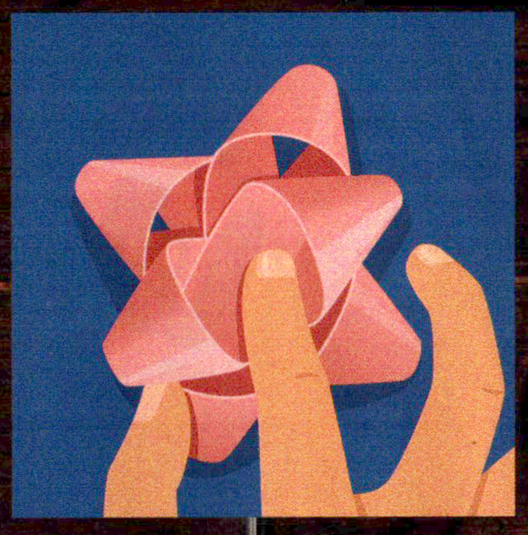
Beautiful Bow



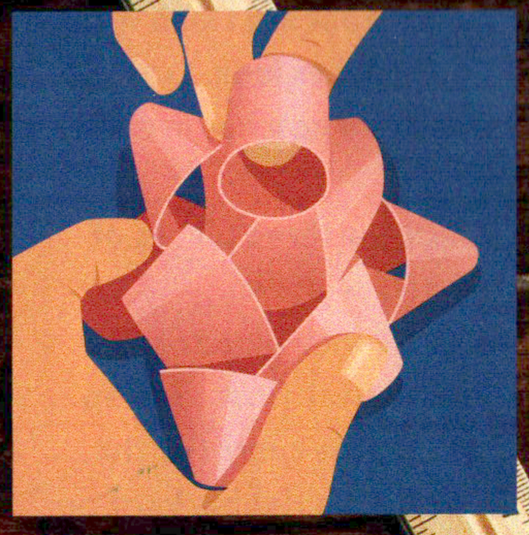
1. Cut seven 1-inch-wide strips of paper. Make three of the strips 12 inches long, three of the strips 10 inches long, and one strip 5 inches long.



2. Fold each 12-inch and 10-inch paper strip into a figure-eight shape as shown. Staple each figure eight in the center.



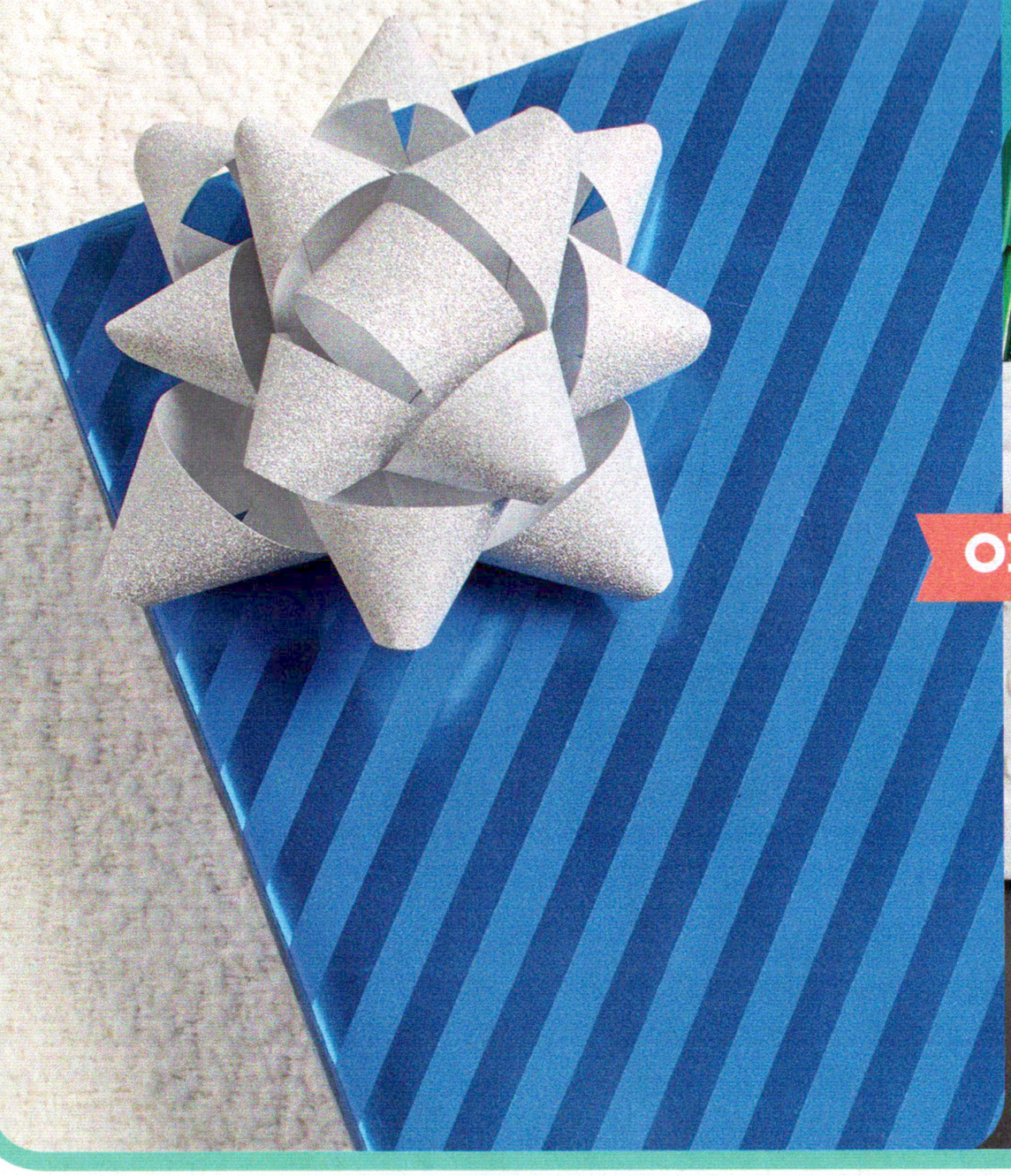
3. Layer the three largest figure eights as shown. Use glue to attach them in the center. Repeat with the other three matching strips.



4. Attach the second set of figure eights to the first using double-stick tape. Roll the final strip into a loop. Attach it to the center of the bow with double-stick tape.

Top a Gift

Use double-stick tape to attach the bow to a gift.



OR



Make a Craft

Use craft glue to attach the bow to a small sheet magnet. Use the bow magnet to decorate a memo board or a refrigerator.

Illustrations: Monika Roe Styling: Andrea Debbink

Stacked Bow

1. Start with three pieces of ribbon that are 1 inch wide and 6 inches long. Cut V-shaped notches in each end.
2. Stack the three pieces of ribbon as shown.
3. Use a 6-inch piece of embroidery floss to wrap around the center of the stack. Tie a double knot on the underside of the ribbons. Trim excess.



OR

Top a Gift

Use an adhesive dot to attach the bow to a gift.



Make a Craft

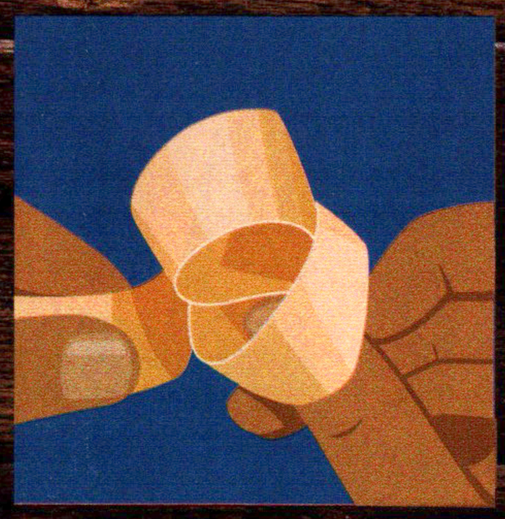
Use craft glue to attach the bow to a headband.



Bow Tied



1. Start with a piece of ribbon that's 1½ inches wide and 20 inches long. Make a loop at one end of the ribbon.



2. Wrap the long end of the ribbon over the front of the loop and to the back.



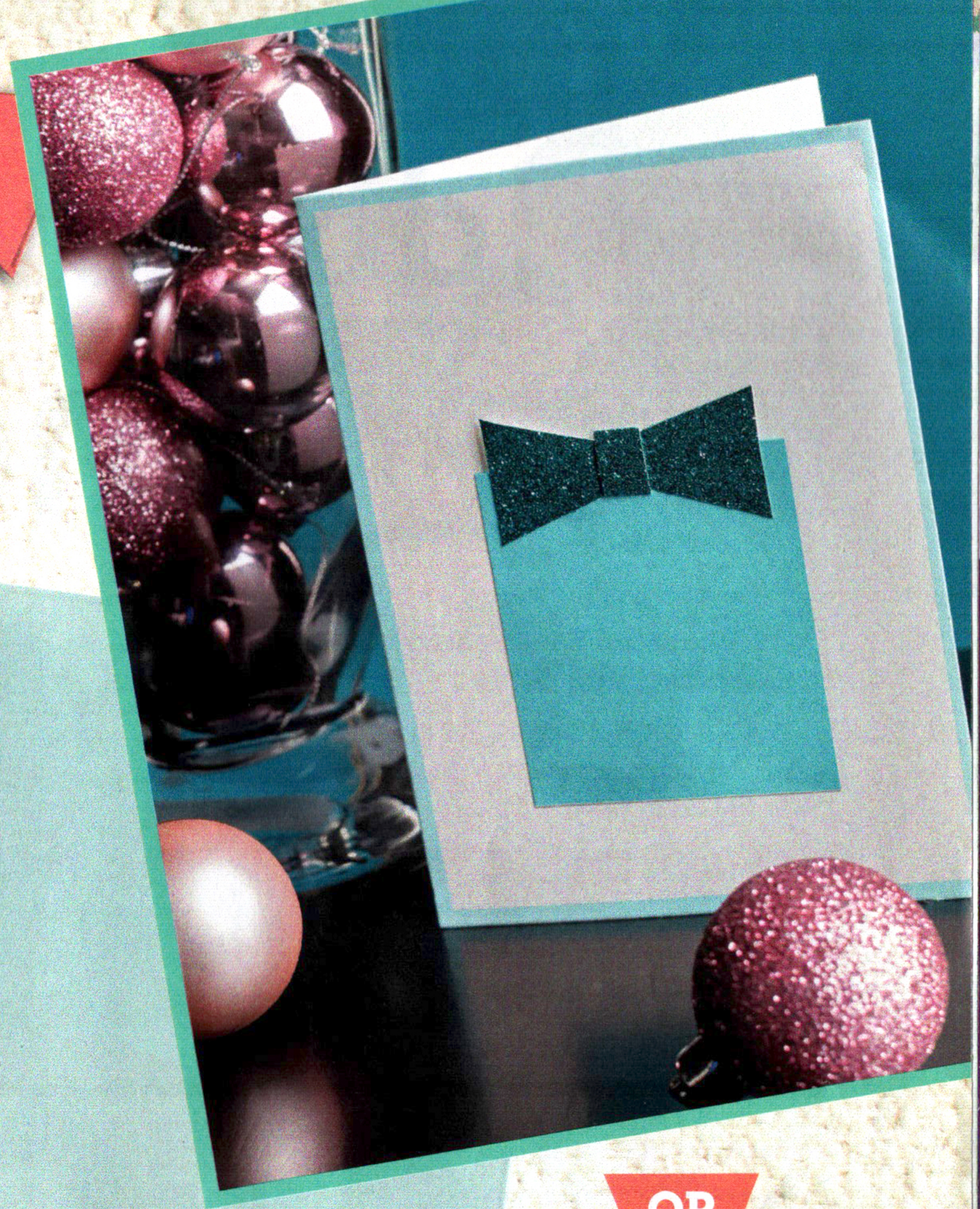
3. Bring the long end of the ribbon back through itself so that you have two loops.



4. Put a thumb in each loop and pull on the loops and ribbon ends to tighten. Cut V-shaped notches in each end of the ribbon.

Bow Sticker

1. Fold a piece of paper in half. (The size will depend on how large or small you want the bow sticker to be.) Use a ruler and pencil to draw a triangle that overlaps the fold at one point.
2. Cut along the pencil lines. Then unfold the paper to reveal the bow shape.
3. Trace around the shape on a sheet of duct tape paper or glitter tape (available at craft stores). Cut out the bow shape.



Top a Gift

Peel off the paper backing, and attach the sticker to a gift.

OR

Make a Craft

Use bow stickers to decorate holiday cards or school supplies.

Top a Gift

Use an adhesive dot to attach the bow to a gift bag.



OR

Make a Craft

Glue a pin back to the back of the bow and let dry. (Be careful with the pin's sharp point.) Attach the bow pin to a pencil case or bag. ★



do you speak emoji?

Can you read this sentence?

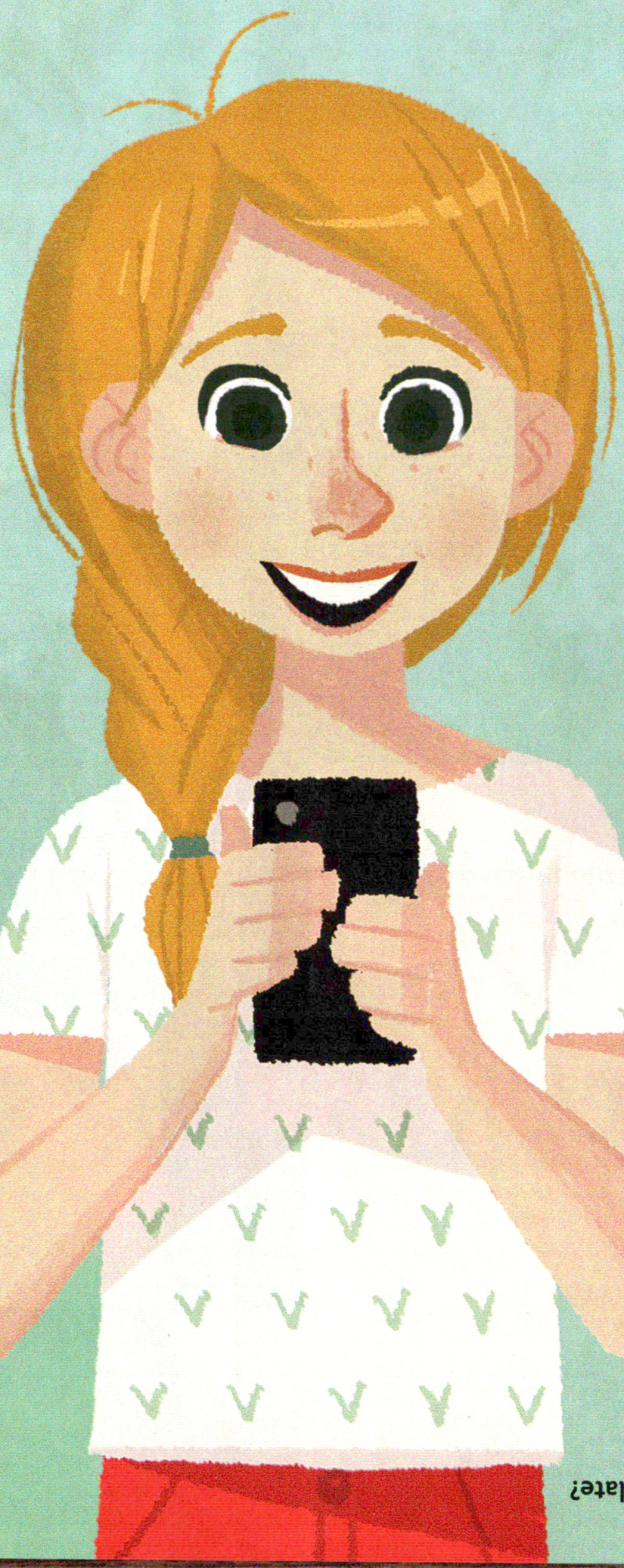


*

If you can, you're speaking the language *emoji*! But instead of letters and words, this language uses little pictures to express feelings, ideas, and things.

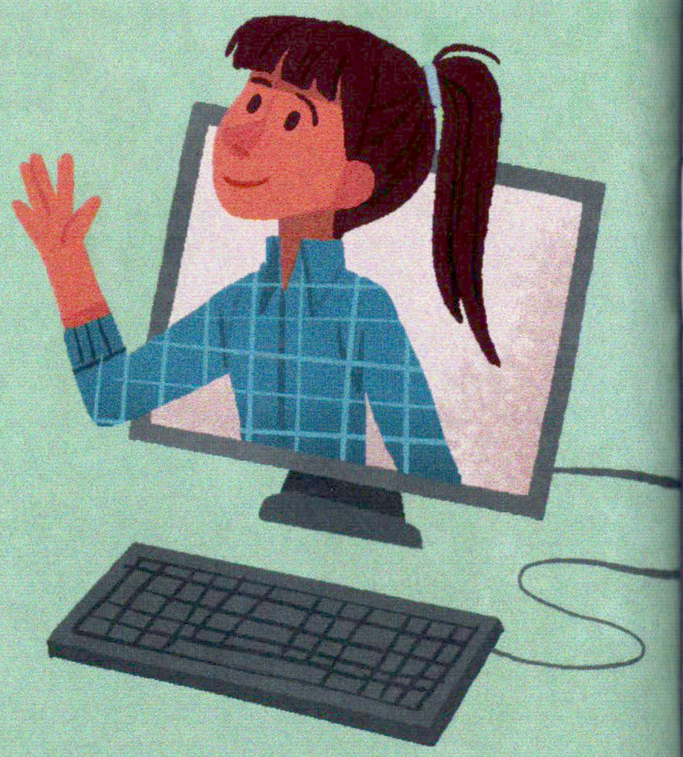
Sometimes emojis replace words, like in the sentence above, making a puzzle for friends to solve. Sometimes you see emojis at the end of a sentence or message—maybe a laughing face after a joke, or a puppy when talking about a pet. Emojis are like sprinkles or special sauce, giving your words extra flavor!







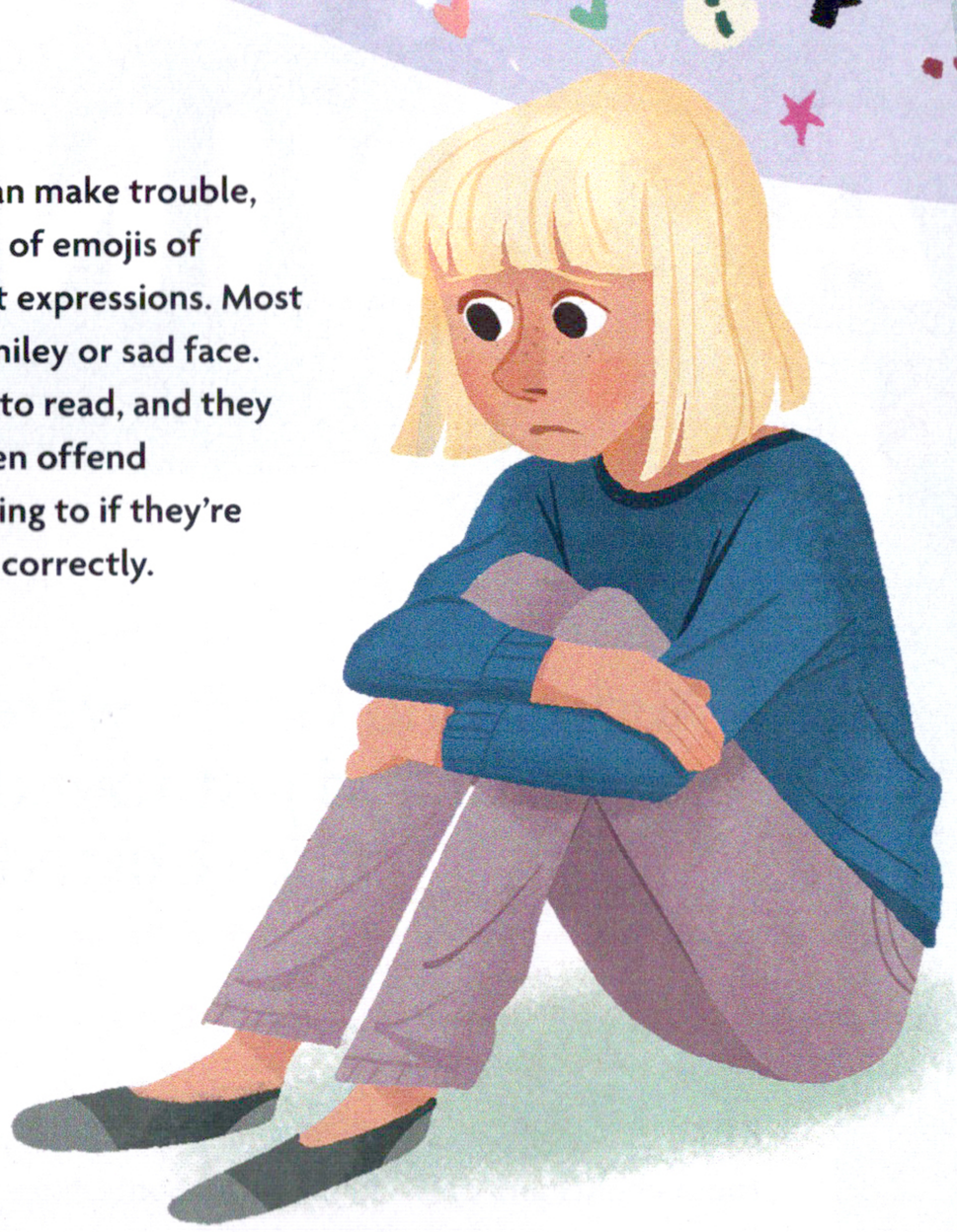
Emojis are more than just fun, though. They actually help you communicate better in the digital world. When you're talking face-to-face with someone—say, your BFF or your dad or your teacher—you "hear" a lot more than just words. You see a smile or a certain look; you sense surprise or stress in someone's voice. When those non-word parts of communication are missing, emojis can help make your meaning more clear.



*Finding the emoji sentence too hard to translate?
Meet me tonight for pizza?

But be careful. Emojis can make trouble, too. There are hundreds of emojis of faces—all with different expressions. Most are obvious, such as a smiley or sad face. But some aren't so easy to read, and they can confuse, hurt, or even offend the person you're e-talking to if they're not used or interpreted correctly.







Still, a smile is a smile and a frown is a frown, no matter where you live or what language you speak. Emojis are a kind of universal language. Used wisely, they can help you communicate better *and* have more fun in your digital world!



Emoji Etiquette

When using emojis, remember these simple dos and don'ts.

Do have fun expressing yourself and sending lighthearted messages with emojis!

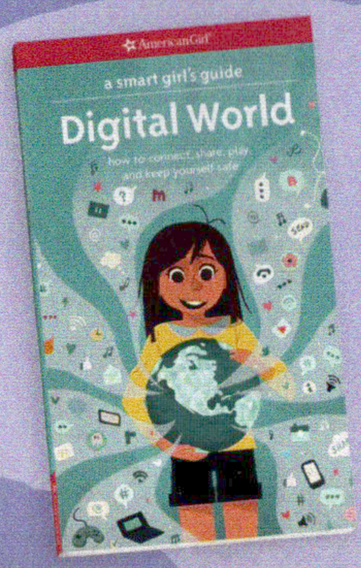
Don't try to have a hard conversation with a friend, using an emoji to soften a situation. Face-to-face is always a better way to talk when it's especially important to understand and be understood.

Do know what an emoji means before you send it.

Don't use emojis to try to confuse your meaning or excuse unkindness (for example: *Whoa, that's one ugly shirt* 😊).

Do ask a friend to translate if you receive an emoji you don't understand—especially if it bothers you.





More great ideas for having fun online, staying safe, and being true to yourself can be found in the book *A Smart Girl's Guide: Digital World.*

Illustrations: Stevie Lewis

GRACIE

I HAVE A TWIN?

Audrey and Gracie were separated at birth and just found out each other existed.

AMERICAN GIRL MAGAZINE: What was your life like before you knew you had a twin?

GRACIE: My life was really normal but super busy because I had soccer tournaments and basketball tournaments. Now I'm still doing all those things, but I'm even busier.

AUDREY: It was pretty normal. I did gymnastics and played with friends a lot.

AGM: Describe the moment you discovered you had a twin. How did you find out?

GRACIE: I was adopted from China when I was a baby. Last year, my mom showed me a picture of Audrey when she was little. She thought it was me, and I did, too. But it was Audrey. I couldn't believe it. Audrey's mom found my mom on social media! Later, my parents were upstairs on the phone with Audrey's parents for an hour. My mom called me upstairs, and my whole family was in our living room and they told me!

AUDREY

GRACIE

AUDREY

GRACIE

I'M A TWIN?



AUDREY: I was adopted from China when I was about fifteen months old. We don't know how we were separated, but Gracie was adopted a month before me. Last fall, my mom said she had a surprise after gymnastics and showed me a picture of Gracie. I thought it was a joke and that she was kidding. But I could tell it wasn't me in the photo because I have a mole near my mouth and on my forehead, and the girl in the photo didn't.

AGM: What was running through your head?

GRACIE: I was thinking what the heck is going on?! I was really happy, but it was also really weird.

AUDREY: I was happy and in disbelief.

AGM: How did you feel when you found out you were going to meet your twin?

GRACIE: I was super excited to meet Audrey but also really nervous because we were going to meet on a TV show in New York City. I was afraid I would do something weird on live TV.

AUDREY: I felt really excited when we were waiting to go on the show. It felt like it took forever to get to our segment on the TV show, but it was worth it! When I met Gracie, I was really happy.







AGM: How did your life change after you found out you had a twin?

GRACIE: Audrey and I talk on video-chat all the time. I kept thinking, "Oh my gosh, Audrey is so much like me." She likes the same foods as me. She even acts the same as me. I found that out when we sent videos to each other.

AUDREY: I get to go more places to visit her, and when I'm bored, I can call her. Also, when we see each other, it's fun to play with her and get to know her better.

AGM: Describe how you were feeling the day you were going to meet your sister.

GRACIE: After we met on TV, we went to a brunch and had chocolate chip pancakes. Later that night, we had a sleepover in Audrey's hotel room and played games on her tablet.

AUDREY: I was really nervous and a little eager. I loved meeting Gracie and being on TV. I also liked going to the American Girl store in New York City.

AGM: What's it like having a twin?

GRACIE: It's really awesome, but sometimes we get a little sad because we're so busy and don't get to see each other. It's hard not living close. We call each other and text on different apps. It's really fun when we go somewhere together. After we met in New York, we spent almost a week together in San Diego over spring break. We're always looking forward to the next time we will see each other. And we're looking forward to meeting each other's dogs. I'm counting the days until Audrey comes to visit me in Washington.

AUDREY: Yes, we video-chat whenever we can. We've both been so busy lately, though. The time difference makes it a little difficult to talk because I live in Wisconsin.

AGM: How are you similar?

GRACIE: We both wear glasses and love sports. We're both weird and funny. And we both like macaroni and cheese and alfredo sauce. We love dogs, and we talk the same and laugh the same. We both have a heart condition. We're both obsessed with math, and we love scary amusement park rides.



LIGHTNING ROUND Q&A WITH AUDREY:

FAVORITE MEAL?
Noodles

FAVORITE COLOR? Teal

FAVORITE ANIMAL?
Panda

FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL? Math

FAVORITE OUTFIT?
Athletic pants and shirt

FAVORITE KIND OF MOVIE OR BOOK? Fantasy

FAVORITE KIND OF MUSIC? Country

LUCKY NUMBER? 28

FAVORITE THING TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS?
Playing with friends and having sleepovers

FAVORITE SPORT?
Gymnastics

SPECIAL HOBBY OR WEIRD TALENT? Jumping rope and pogo stick

GIVING PRESENTS OR GETTING PRESENTS?
Getting presents

HOT COCOA OR HOT TEA?
Hot cocoa

PUPPIES OR KITTENS?
Puppies

SNAKES OR SPIDERS?
Spiders



AUDREY: We have almost the exact same glasses. Mine are pink on the inside, and Gracie's are blue on the inside. We both like wearing our hair in side ponytails! We have the same number of siblings, and we're both the youngest. We both have dogs.

AGM: How are you different?

GRACIE: Audrey is a lefty, and I'm a righty. Audrey does gymnastics, and I play soccer. She does yoga, and I play basketball. Audrey plays the violin, and I used to play the marimba. I'm a little taller than Audrey, and I have bigger feet.

AUDREY: I like to wear dresses and Gracie doesn't.

AGM: How would you describe yourself in three words?

GRACIE: Funny, daring, and sporty.

AUDREY: Funny, energetic, and smart.

AGM: How would you describe your sister?

GRACIE: Audrey is funny, smart, and athletic.

AUDREY: I would describe her the same way I describe myself: funny, energetic, and smart.

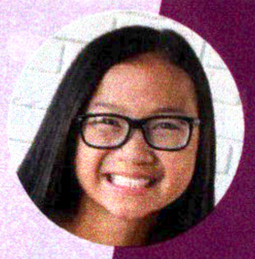
AGM: What's the best part about having a twin?

GRACIE: You get to have somebody exactly like you. We're so much alike.

AUDREY: Getting to know her better each time we talk. ★

Photos: Brittney Kluse Photography





LIGHTNING ROUND Q&A WITH GRACIE:

FAVORITE MEAL? Alfredo sauce and garlic bread

FAVORITE COLOR? Aqua

FAVORITE ANIMAL? Panda

FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL? Math

FAVORITE OUTFIT? Sport shorts and an athletic T-shirt

FAVORITE KIND OF MOVIE OR BOOK? Mysteries for books and comedy movies

FAVORITE KIND OF MUSIC? Teen pop music

LUCKY NUMBER? 23

FAVORITE THING TO DO ON THE WEEKENDS? Hang out with friends

FAVORITE SPORT? Soccer and basketball (I also like watching football)

SPECIAL HOBBY OR WEIRD TALENT? Talking and asking lots of questions

GIVING PRESENTS OR GETTING PRESENTS? Getting presents

HOT COCOA OR HOT TEA? Hot cocoa

PUPPIES OR KITTENS? Puppies

SNAKES OR SPIDERS? Snakes



CARE in the COLD

Soothe your body and mind with these winter tips and tricks.

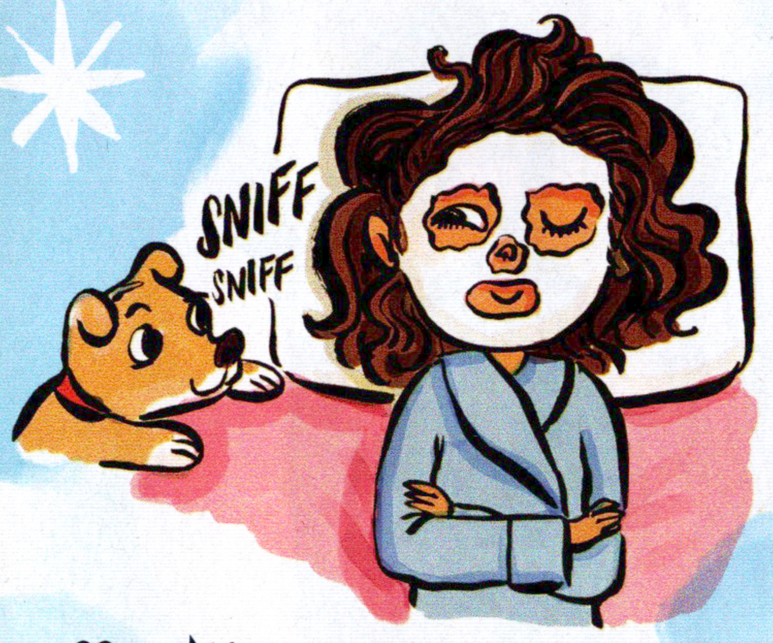
What makes you feel happy and cozy in the winter? Do you string soft LED lights across your room? Or if you live in a place where it snows, do you take a walk after the first flurries of the season? Give these ideas a try, and surround yourself with the things and people who make you happy.

Take care of your body:

Soften chapped lips with lip balm. (Tip: Keep balm in your pocket to keep it warm and soft—and always handy.)



Give yourself a facial. Mix 1/2 cup plain yogurt, 1 teaspoon honey, 1/3 cup warm water, and a teaspoon of olive oil in a bowl. Spread the mask onto your face and let sit for five minutes, then rinse off with warm water. Test for allergies or any kind of reaction to the mix on your inner forearm before applying it to your face.





Ask a parent before using any type of face mask, lotion, or moisturizer on your skin.



Drink hot tea and lots of water.

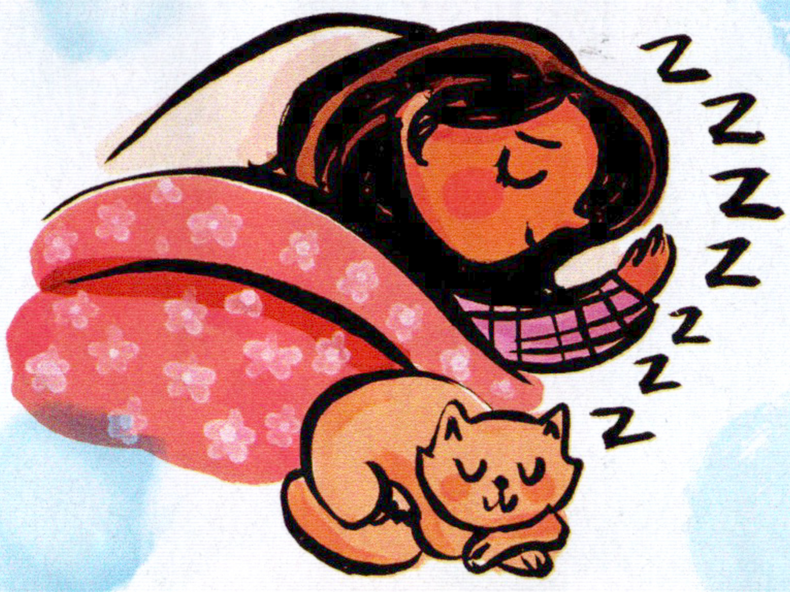


Moisturize your skin daily with a light, fragrance-free lotion.



Take a relaxing bath or shower (but not too hot and not too long!).

Go to bed early and enjoy some extra sleep.

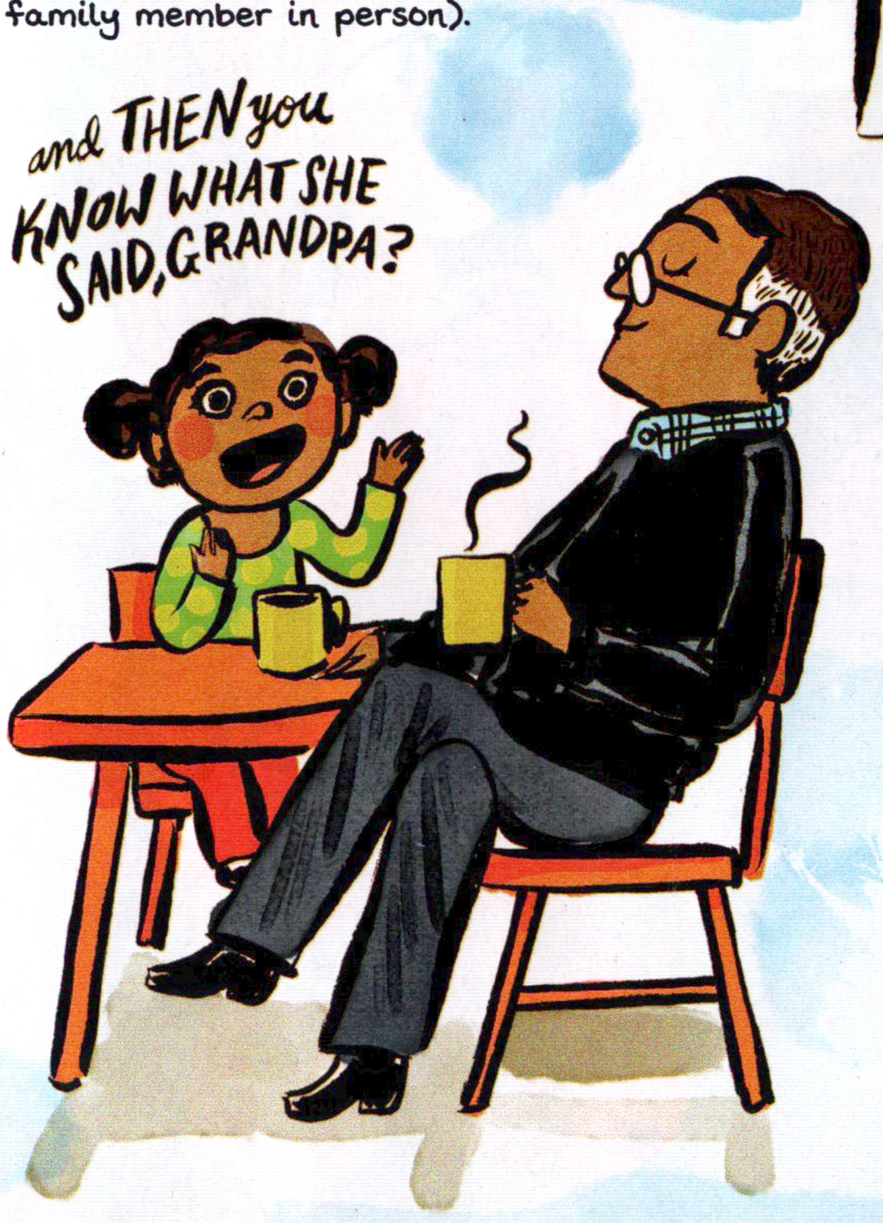


Take care of your mind:

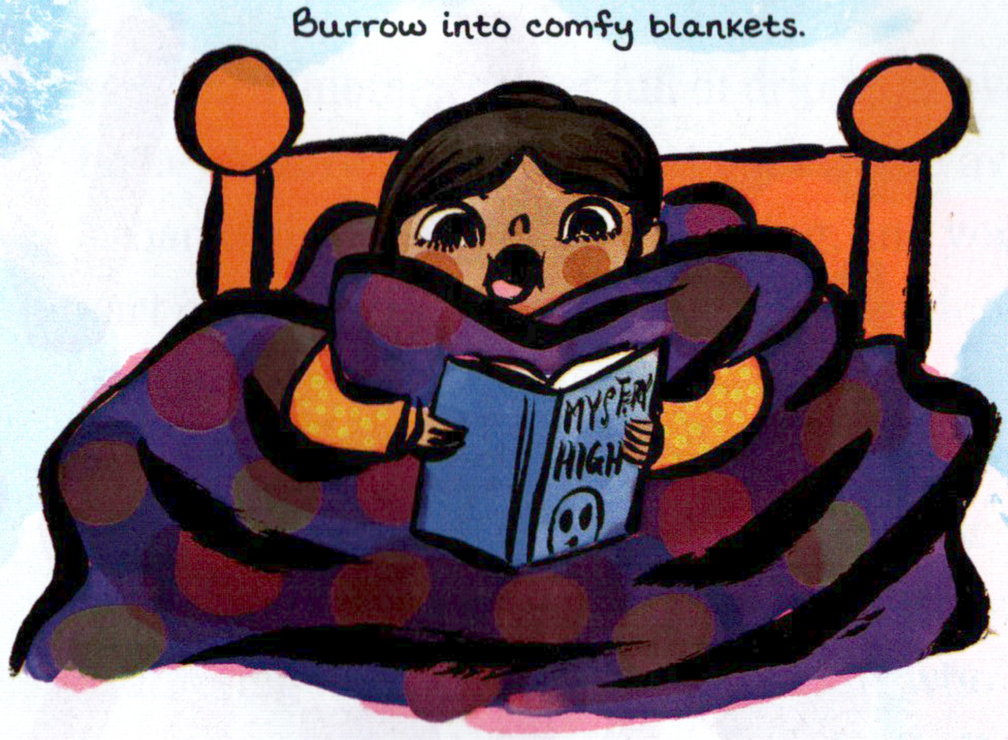
Wear cozy sweaters and soft socks. (Tip: Pull straight from the clothes dryer for extra warmth!)



Spend some time away from your phone and other screens (stare out the window or spend some extra time chatting with a friend or family member in person).



Burrow into comfy blankets.



Bundle up and get outside! Take a walk with a friend and enjoy the fresh air.



Remind yourself to take a deep breath and let your worries float away. ★



Snuggle with your pet.



Dance to your favorite tunes.



Illustrations: Micah Player

Fiction

A VERY SHORT LIST

Ella is excited to meet her sister's new boyfriend. Why isn't he excited to meet *her*?

by
Lisa Graff



Every year at Thanksgiving, Ella was surprised how many people fit in her family's house.

There were the adults, like Ella's stepuncle, Roy, whose booming laugh made the windows rattle. And Grandpa Marvin, who always told the same knock-knock joke ("Interrupting cow wh—?" "Moooooooo!") And Aunt Alicia, whose yippy dog, Patches, snarfed down all the deviled eggs. And Aunt Pamela, and Uncle Theo, and . . . the grown-ups could fill a house all on their own.

Then there were the cousins, whom Ella and her older sister, Morgan, liked to call the "Itty-Bitties," because they were all so much younger. There was Laurel, who thought everything was a trampoline. And Jeffrey, who had one volume (EXTRA LOUD!!!). And Christopher, and Esther, and Daniel, and . . .

"Can't I please go read in my room?" Ella asked her mom. Ella's room was so wonderfully quiet. "Just until Morgan gets here."

"Your sister called to say they're running late," her mom replied. "And no about your room." She squeezed another baster full of drippings over the turkey before sliding the bird back in the oven. "Thanksgiving is a family gathering, and you are part of the family." Bong! went the oven door. "So, go gather."

Ella flicked one of the charms on the bracelet her stepdad had given her for her birthday. It wasn't fair that the only person who ever got out of "gathering" was Grandmom Georgine, who spent the afternoon dozing in front of the football game on TV in the basement. Maybe big family gatherings were fun for loud, bouncy cousins or egg-stealing dogs, but not for Ella. The list of things Ella liked about Thanksgiving was very short.



Illustrations: Tatevik Avakyan

That was it. Everything else about Thanksgiving was the pits. Thanksgiving was loud, and Ella preferred quiet. Ella preferred calm. She preferred—

"Oof!"

"WE'RE BUILDING A FORT, ELLE-BOW!" Ella's cousin Jeffrey shouted at her, as Daniel tackled her around the knees. "YOU HAVE TO HELP!"

Ella glanced at her mom. "When did you say Morgan would get here?"

"An hour," her mom replied, as Daniel and the other Itty-Bitties dragged Ella out of the kitchen. "Have fun with the fort!"

While the Itty-Bitties bounced across couch cushions, Ella counted the minutes until Morgan arrived. Morgan had been away at college for almost three months, and Ella missed her terribly. Morgan talked to Ella like a mature, reasonable person, not like an Itty-Bitty. Sometimes Morgan made Ella laugh so hard that snot shot out her nose. And Morgan was amazing at solving problems—which was perfect, because Ella had a doozy of one, something too big to discuss during their weekly video chats. Ella just hoped they'd have enough time to talk about it, what with all the time Ella planned on spending getting to know Morgan's new boyfriend, Amir, whom Morgan was bringing home for the first time. Ella had heard all about him, and he sounded just as cool as Morgan.

Ella's thoughts were interrupted by her cousin Esther. "Patches is EATING TOILET PAPER!" Esther shrieked. Uncle Roy's laughter shook the windows. Ella flicked her charm bracelet, willing her sister to appear at the front door.

So when the door finally did open, Ella practically knocked Morgan over. "You're here!" she breathed, squeezing her sister tight.

Morgan squeezed Ella right back. "I missed you too, Elle-Belle," she said. And then she pulled away. "This," she said with a grin, "is Amir."

Ella took in the guy standing beside her sister. He was wearing a checkered shirt that looked two sizes too big and a tie that puckered at the neck. He tugged at his watchband.

"Hey," he muttered, hardly even glancing at Ella.

Ella had expected more than "Hey." Wasn't Amir excited to meet her, like she was excited to meet him? Or had Amir taken one look at her



and decided she wasn't cool enough to talk to?

"Um," Ella started, glancing from Morgan to Amir and back again. "The Itty-Bitties asked if we could all play dress-up with them. Only first I had something I—"

Amir shot a quick glance at Morgan, and Morgan cut Ella off. "Actually," Morgan said quickly, "does Grandmom Georgine have the game on in the basement?" Ella nodded, confused by the question. Morgan hated football. "Amir and I are going to join her. We can hang out later, okay, Elle-Belle?"

Ella's heart sank as Morgan and Amir scuttled off toward the basement. She thought about following them, but why would she want to hang out with someone who clearly didn't want her around? She thought about tattling on them for not "gathering" with the rest of the family, but that would probably only make Amir hate her more. Ella flicked at her bracelet. Amir clearly wanted nothing to do with her.

AMIR CLEARLY WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH HER.

While the turkey finished cooking, Ella let the Itty-Bitties dress her up as a doctor, a witch, and a superhero. She let Grandpa Marvin tell her his knock-knock joke ("Interrupting—?" "Moooooooo!"). She wrestled her favorite book away from Patches. She played checkers and thumb war and Go Fish. She jumped every time Uncle Roy laughed.

And then, when the table was set and the turkey was finally ready, Ella breathed a sigh of relief. There might not be much she liked about Thanksgiving, but she could see the platter of stuffies and an empty seat right next to Morgan. It was time at last for her Number One favorite thing.

Only when Ella tried to sit down, her mother said, "We should probably let Amir have that seat, don't you think?" And Morgan didn't even argue! Ella's mom led her to the far end of the table, where the Itty-Bitties were sitting, light years away from Morgan and the platter of stuffies.

"Yay!" Laurel squealed, bouncing in her chair. "We get Elle-Bow!"

"YEAH!" Jeffrey shouted. "ELLE-BOW'S THE COOLEST!"

"Elle-Bow's so cool I bet she has a trillion-million friends!" Christopher agreed.

"I am not cool," Ella growled as she flicked at her bracelet. "And I do not have a trillion-million friends."

The truth was, Ella didn't have any friends. Not at school, anyway. That's what she needed Morgan's help with. Because at the same time Morgan had started college, Ella had started a new school. But while Morgan had managed to join clubs and make friends and even find a boyfriend, Ella spent every lunch period sitting by herself with only a book for company, trying to look friendly enough that someone would come over and say hi.

Nobody ever did.

"HOW COME YOU DON'T HAVE FRIENDS?" Jeffrey asked, loud enough for New Zealand to hear.

Ella shrugged her shoulders, like it wasn't a big deal. But it was. "No one wants to talk to me," she



explained. "I keep waiting and waiting, but no one wants to be my friend." She glanced across the table at Morgan, who was laughing at Grandpa Marvin's joke like she'd never heard it before. ("Moooooooo!") When the plate of stuffies went past Amir, he didn't take one. He actually wrinkled his nose at them, like they were disgusting. And Morgan didn't even tell him they were the best part of the whole meal!

"If you wanna be friends with someone," Daniel said, making a monster out of his bread roll, "how come you don't say hi?"

"Daniel's right," Laurel said, bouncing in her seat. (Bounce! Bounce! Bounce!) Ella grabbed for the platter of stuffies that had finally made its way to her, wishing she had never started this conversation. "Maybe everybody is just as scared of making friends as you are. Maybe you should try being friends with them."

Fortunately, Ella didn't have to bother telling Laurel how wrong she was, because Patches starting barking, distracting everybody.

Unfortunately, the thing Patches was barking at was the platter of stuffies in Ella's hand. He leaped up and knocked the platter to the floor, sending celery sticks soaring.

"Bad dog!" Aunt Alicia scolded. But Patches seemed very pleased with himself. The carpet was littered with stuffies, and pink cream cheese was already smeared across the dog's muzzle. Uncle Roy's laughter shook the windows.

Thanksgiving was officially a disaster.

As soon as dinner was over, Ella snuck upstairs to her bedroom to read. She didn't care if her mom got mad. Who would ever miss her anyway?

Knock-knock-knock!

Morgan's head appeared in the doorway.

"Can I come in, Elle-Belle?" she asked.

Ella's throat was dry, so she didn't respond. She only nodded.

Morgan made her way to Ella's bed, scooting

Petey the Penguin aside to sit down. "Is everything okay?" Morgan asked.

Ella flicked her bracelet charms one by one, avoiding her sister's gaze. Suddenly Ella had a new list, and it was terribly long.

THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT WHEN YOUR SISTER'S BOYFRIEND HATES YOU

a list by Ella Segal

1. Why does Amir hate me?
2. What did I do wrong?
3. How can I fix it?
4. What if Amir tells Morgan why he hates me, and then she hates me, too?
5. What if Morgan and Amir get married and move far away, and Morgan never talks to me again?
6. Worse, what if they move right next door, but Morgan thinks I'm so awful she still won't talk to me?

Ella knew she couldn't say any of that. So instead, she told her sister, "I've been having trouble at school. Making friends, I mean." She hugged Petey to her chest. "No one wants to be friends with me."

"Oh, Elle-Belle," Morgan said kindly. She gave Ella's shoulder a gentle bump. "You know, I had trouble making friends when I first got to college, too."

"You did?" Ella didn't believe it.

"I hardly spoke to anyone for the first two weeks," Morgan told her. "I didn't get along with my roommates, and meeting people in class was hard."

"So what did you do?" Ella asked.

"Well," Morgan said, "one day I noticed this cute guy sitting all by himself in the dining hall, reading a book. At first I thought that he was way too into his book to want to talk to anybody, and if he did want to talk to someone, he probably wouldn't choose me." Ella knew that was silly—anybody would be lucky to talk to Morgan. But she let her sister finish. "But then I thought, 'What if he's just waiting for someone to talk to him?'"

Ella had a feeling she knew where this was going. "So you went over and said hi," she guessed. "And that boy was Amir, and now he's your boyfriend and everything worked out great." *Except that he hates me,* she added silently.

Morgan laughed. "Well," she said, "pretty much. Yeah. I know you haven't had a chance to talk to him yet, but he's really wonderful. I told you he's an art major, right? He's so talented! And he's funny and smart and . . ." She trailed off, a big smile on her face. "Meeting Amir made those first few tough weeks of college totally worth it."

Ella flicked a charm on her bracelet. "I'm glad you met him then," she told her sister. And she tried to mean it.

"Do you know when I first figured out that Amir and I were going to get along?" Morgan asked, straightening Petey's bow tie. Ella shook her head. "It was when I realized how much he was like you."

"How is Amir like me?" Ella asked. He loved football and wouldn't even try the stuffies!

"You both fidget when you're feeling shy, for one thing," Morgan told her, pointing to Ella's wrist. Ella stopped flicking her charm bracelet, remembering the way Amir had been tugging on his watchband all day. "And neither of you talks much at first," Morgan went on. "But, Elle-Belle?" Morgan waited until Ella looked up. "The biggest thing you two have in common is that you're both worth the effort of getting to know."

Ella let Morgan wrap an arm around her. It was warm and comforting. She'd missed Morgan these past three months. She really had.

"I'm sorry I haven't gotten to talk to you today," Morgan said. "I just felt like I had to keep Amir company. He gets nervous sometimes, especially with new people. I was doing my best to make him comfortable. I mean, can you imagine being on your own for the first time with this bunch of weirdos?"

That made Ella laugh, a snot-coming-out-of-her-nose snort. "That does sound pretty rough," she admitted, wiping her nose with the back of her hand.

"By the way," Morgan said, "I saved my last stuffie. It's downstairs waiting for you. I knew you'd be sad if you missed your Number One favorite thing about Thanksgiving."

Ella smiled at that. Maybe the holiday hadn't been such a disaster after all.

And then something occurred to her. "Where is Amir, anyway?" she asked.

"Downstairs listening to Aunt Alicia talk about Patches and his doggy dental surgery," Morgan replied.

Ella snot-laughed again. "Maybe we should go save him," she told her sister.

Morgan nodded. "I think Amir would appreciate that. Besides, it's almost time for your Number Two favorite thing. You ready to wallop everybody at Pictionary and Pie, partner?"

"Absolutely," Ella told her sister.

There were nine pies waiting for them when they got downstairs: three pumpkin, one pecan, a key lime, a blackberry, two apple (one covered, one not), and a chocolate silk. Ella loaded up her plate and sat down at the table by the stuffie Morgan had saved for her.

"Everybody grab your partner!" Aunt Pamela hollered, plopping the Pictionary box onto the tabletop.

Ella was trying to catch Morgan's eye when she noticed Amir, hanging back by the fireplace, tugging on his watchband. He did look awfully uncomfortable around all these new people.

"Pie and Pictionary is a family tradition," Ella overheard Grandpa Marvin telling him. "It gets pretty crazy. You'll love it. By the way, you want to hear a joke?"

As Ella watched Amir ("Inter—?" "Moooooo!"), she thought about what Laurel had said at dinner: "Maybe everybody is just as scared of making friends as you are."

Ella took a deep breath, pushed back her plate of pie, and walked to the fireplace.

"Hey, Amir," she said softly. "Um." She glanced back at her pie and then pushed the words out. "Do you want to be my partner for Pictionary?"

Amir looked up from his watch and coughed. And for a second, Ella thought she'd been wrong about everything. Maybe he really did hate her. But then he smiled. "You sure?" he said.

"Yeah," Ella replied, trying out a smile of her own. "Morgan told me you're an artist. And I'm a good guesser. I bet we'd be a great team." That's when Morgan joined them, her plate crowded with pie. "I mean," Ella said, "if it's okay with Morgan."

Morgan took an enormous bite of blackberry pie. "I can't wait to watch you guys school everybody," she said. When she lowered her fork, blackberry

ELLA THOUGHT SHE'D BEEN WRONG ABOUT EVERYTHING.



bits were smeared all over her chin. "I'm gonna start eating like Patches from now on. What do you guys think?"

While Ella and Amir snot-laughed together, Morgan grinned a blackberry grin. And seeing Morgan that happy—well, it made Ella happy too.

"One thing, though," Ella told Amir on their way back to the table. "If you want to be on my team," she said, and she made her voice very serious, "you have to at least try a stuffie." She pointed to the pimento cream cheese celery stick waiting on the table.

"But that's your favorite thing!" Amir argued. But he was grinning, Ella noticed. He looked nice when he grinned. "Number One on your list! Morgan told me. You want me to eat it?"

"Yep," Ella said, grinning back. "If you wanna be my partner."

Amir thought about it. "Deal," he said at last. And as the pads of paper for Pictionary were being passed around, he took a bite.

"You know?" he said as he swallowed. He took a second bite. "That's surprisingly great."

Funny, Ella thought to herself as she grabbed a pencil. She might have said the same thing about Amir.

Maybe it was time to make a new list.



Meet the Author

Lisa Graff



About age 8



Now

I also come from a big, zany family, and the best part of Thanksgiving dinner is the pimento cream cheese stuffed celery sticks (even if I'm the only one who eats them!). My latest book is *The Great Treehouse War.*

THIS OR THAT

Would you rather . . .

see the northern lights
OR
a winter meteor shower?

sell your handmade ornaments at a craft fair
OR
your homemade food at a festival?

sing "Fa-la-la-la-la" every time you sneeze
OR
hiccup to the tune of "Jingle Bells"?

make a sculpture from mashed potatoes
OR
a self-portrait from pumpkin pie filling?

dress up in costume for Thanksgiving
OR
New Year's Eve?

win a lifetime supply of hot cocoa
OR
cookies?

make a garland of popcorn and cranberries
OR
paper chains and ribbons?

have a winter storm that snows glitter
OR
pom-poms?

go on a sleigh ride
OR
a wintry train ride?

dress your pets in silly sweaters
OR
silly socks?

swap rooms with your parents for a week
OR
lockers with your friend?

go to school all summer and have winters off
OR
all winter and have summers off?

Illustrations: Sharon Sordo

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She's not my mom!



Dear American Girl,

My BFF acts like a mother. She is really bossy! Should I keep on being her friend?

Friending Stress! ☺

Your friend may have real leadership potential. She needs to find the right way to use her gift, though—with projects rather than people. For you, finding your voice with your friend is a skill worth having. Try talking with her about how you feel. If her bossiness is still getting in the way of having fun together, try spending less time with her. If she asks why, you can be honest and try that conversation again. This sort of change probably won't happen overnight. Just remember, a BFF is worth trying to keep.

Dear American Girl,

I did something weird and embarrassing in kindergarten. Now this kid can get me to do anything, saying if I don't he will tell someone.

Embarrassed

What you did may have been "weird and embarrassing," but what this kid is doing is wrong. Tell him the game is over and that if he doesn't leave you alone, you will bring in the grown-ups. Then do it if he keeps bothering you. They can help you deal with the problem, and you may be surprised by how relieved and supported you feel when you tell a trusted adult or two. In the meantime, remember that we all do things we feel embarrassed about. What you did is in the past, and you can put it behind you. It's who you are today that matters.

Illustrations: Laura Cornell

Dear American Girl,

At school, people say I'm the kindest person in my class. That's the problem. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings when they ask to play with me, so I don't say no.

no hurt feelings

Good for you for being a kind and caring person. You don't want to stop being that girl. But it's OK to respect your own feelings as well as others'. If you've made special plans, for example, or you want to talk with your best friend about something private, take the "sandwich" approach. Say something friendly before you say no, such as, "I'd like to play with you, but I've already made plans for today," and then end with something friendly, like, "Maybe tomorrow?" or "Thanks for asking." Think of your kindness and your willingness to play with others as a strength, not a weakness. You are making the world a better place—and showing others how.

Dear American Girl,

I'm really scared. My parents argue a lot, and I'm afraid they'll get a divorce. My mom said everything will be all right, but what if it isn't?

Worried

Most parents go through rough patches, when they argue more than usual. It doesn't automatically mean divorce. Keep talking—with both your mom and your dad. Let them know it's upsetting to hear them fighting, ask for reassurance, and do your best to believe them when they tell you things are OK. If your family does end up changing, you'll be able to deal with it as so many families do, with love and support. For now, though, try not to worry this will happen.



Dear American Girl,

I think I could be thinner. I try working out every day and eating healthy, but I don't see any results. My older sisters are all fit, and it makes me feel bad about myself, even though I try to think about the positive things about me. I still want to look like a singer or model.

baby fat

Every girl's body grows at its own pace. If you're active and eating right, you are probably just right for *you*. To be sure, talk with your doctor. If she says you're healthy, trust your body and be proud of your real beauty. Remember, pictures of models and celebrities are altered, and you're not seeing the real person in them. You don't need a mirror to tell you you're beautiful. Focus on the things you love about your body, such as your bright eyes or your powerful legs, and remind yourself that beauty is not about being thin. It's about being strong and healthy.



Advice from You

Dear American Girl,

My mom and I have a great relationship, but it seems like she's always on her phone. How do I get her to be with me, not her phone?

Help!

Try saying to your mom, "You and I need to have limited screen time so we can spend more time together!" Make it like a joke, and about both of you, so your mom's feelings won't be hurt.

–Kai

Tell her how you feel, and set aside a certain time each day for you to spend time together.

–Abigail

Sometimes I feel like that, too. Tell your mom how you're feeling—but do it when she doesn't have her phone, like at mealtime. You could try texting her, but don't let that get in the way of a real conversation.

–Kate

Maybe she doesn't realize she's on her phone so much. Try asking her, nicely of course, to hang out with you the next time she's been on the phone for a while.

–Lillian

If there's a theater nearby, ask if your mom wants to go see a play or a musical. That always works with me and my mom.

–Madison

Ask your mom if she wants to play a board game.

–Ingrid

My mom is on the phone a lot, too. When your mom isn't busy or distracted, ask her to do something fun that you both enjoy.

–Nina

Help Other Girls!

I have two friends who fight over me nonstop. When I'm with one, the other gets mad and stops talking to me. Please help!

friend trouble

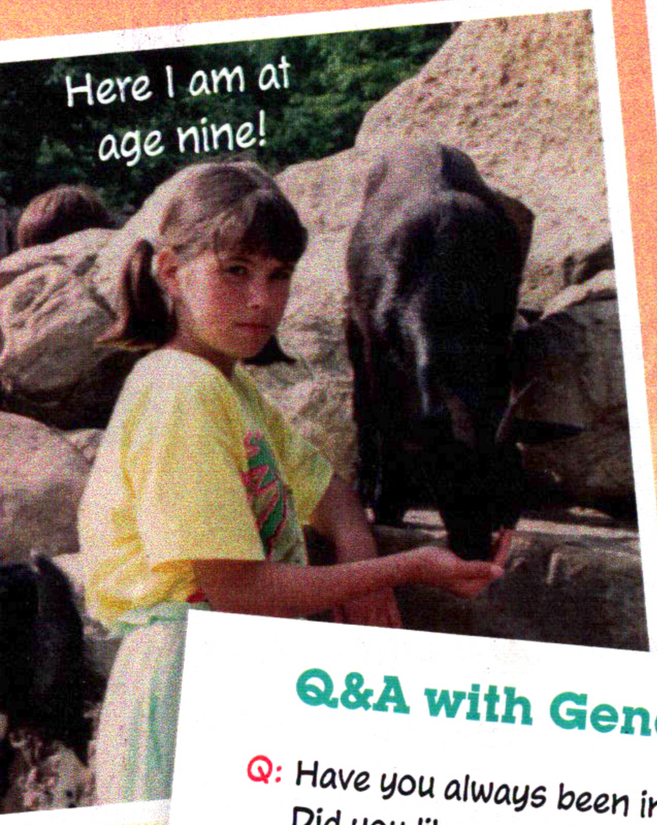
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BEHIND THE Scenes

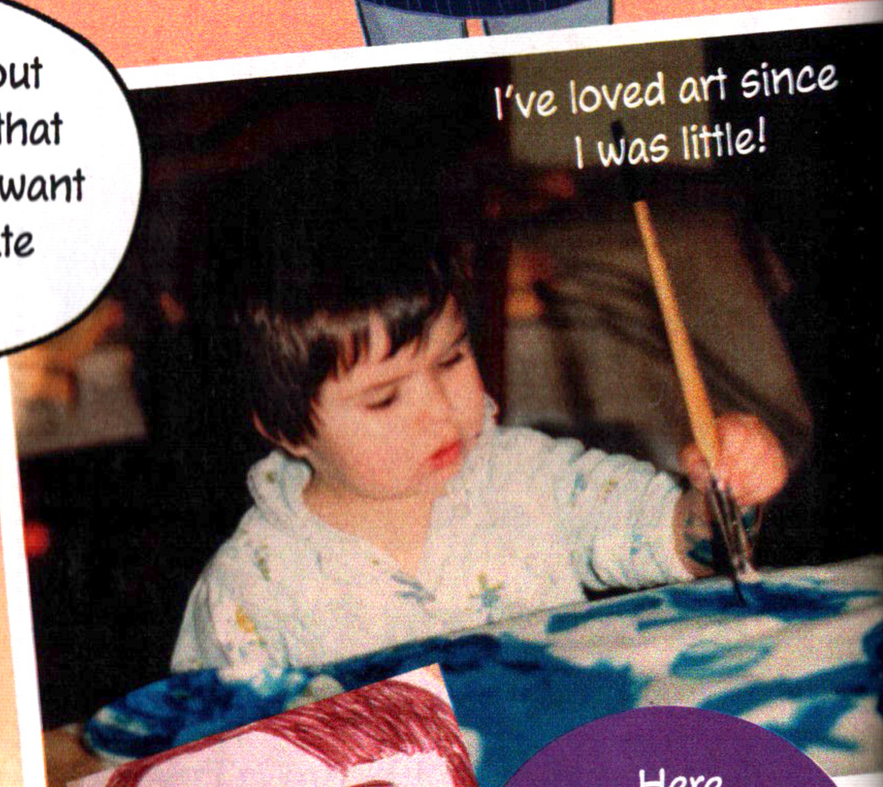
Meet Genevieve Kote, the illustrator behind our comic, *According to Aggie*







My favorite thing about being an illustrator is that I can plan the day as I want and read and illustrate fun stories!



Q&A with Genevieve Kote

Q: Have you always been interested in drawing? Did you like art as a child?
A: I did! I loved painting and drawing trees, animals, and my favorite cartoon characters.

Q: What do you like about the According to Aggie comic?
A: With every new comic we get to explore Aggie's world a little more, what happens at school, what she does at home, her family, her friendships; she even went to a theme park. I love it!

Q: Where do you get your inspiration from?
A: I like to feed my imagination by reading novels, watching movies, and traveling to new places.

Q: Do you have any advice for a reader who'd like to be an artist?
A: Don't compare yourself with others. Keep making art that you love, and you will get better and better!

Q: What's your favorite food?
A: Sushi and strawberry rhubarb pie.

Q: Where do you like to work? Why?
A: I like to work in my studio at home. It is a big room filled with my favorite books, and prints on the wall. It also has all the tools I need to create.

Q: What's your favorite color?
A: I like cherry red, dark blue, purple for drawing, and neon orange to highlight text.

Q: What's your favorite animal?
A: Cats!

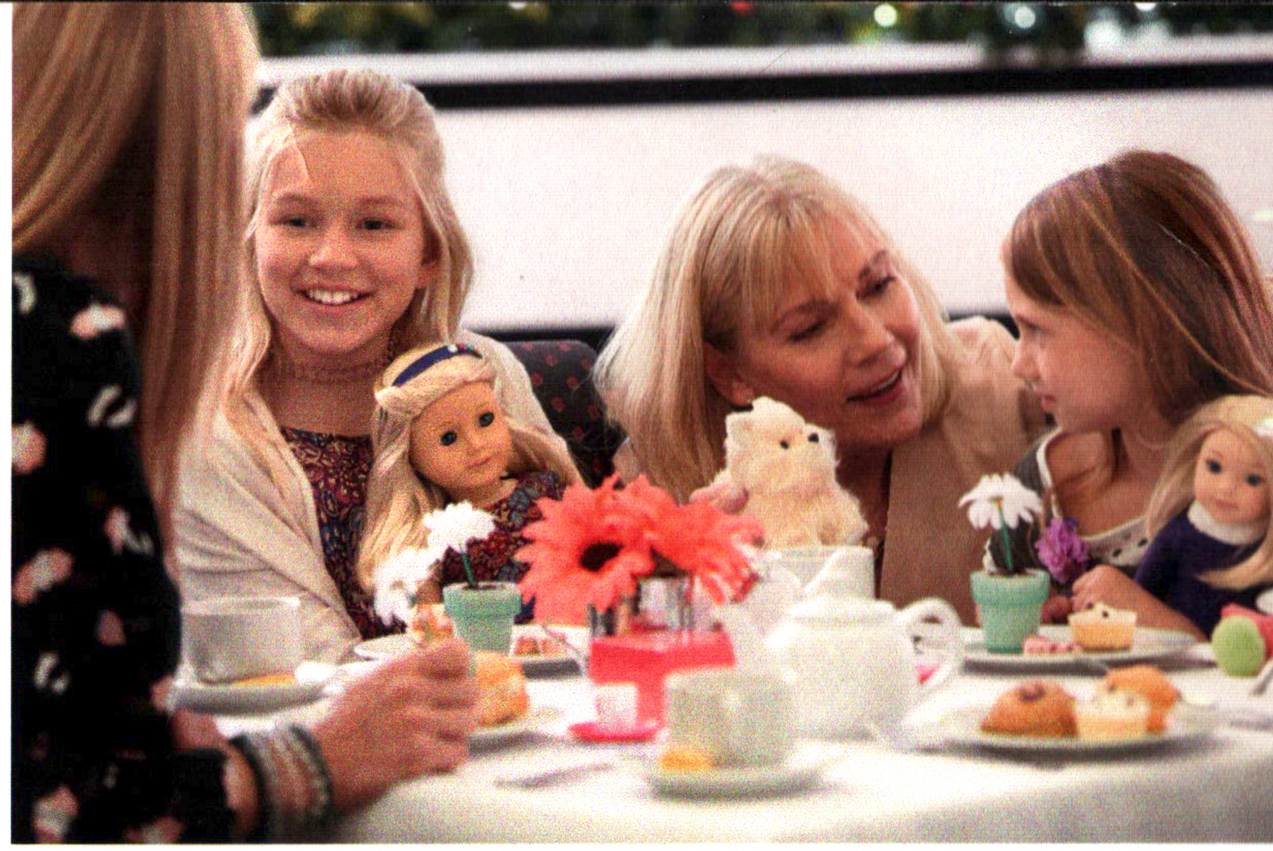




Have you heard? A new **According to Aggie** graphic novel is out now!

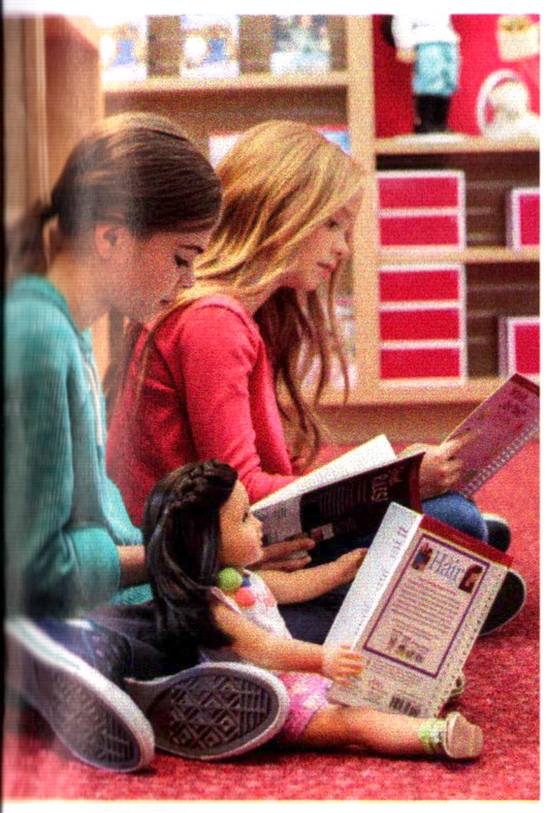






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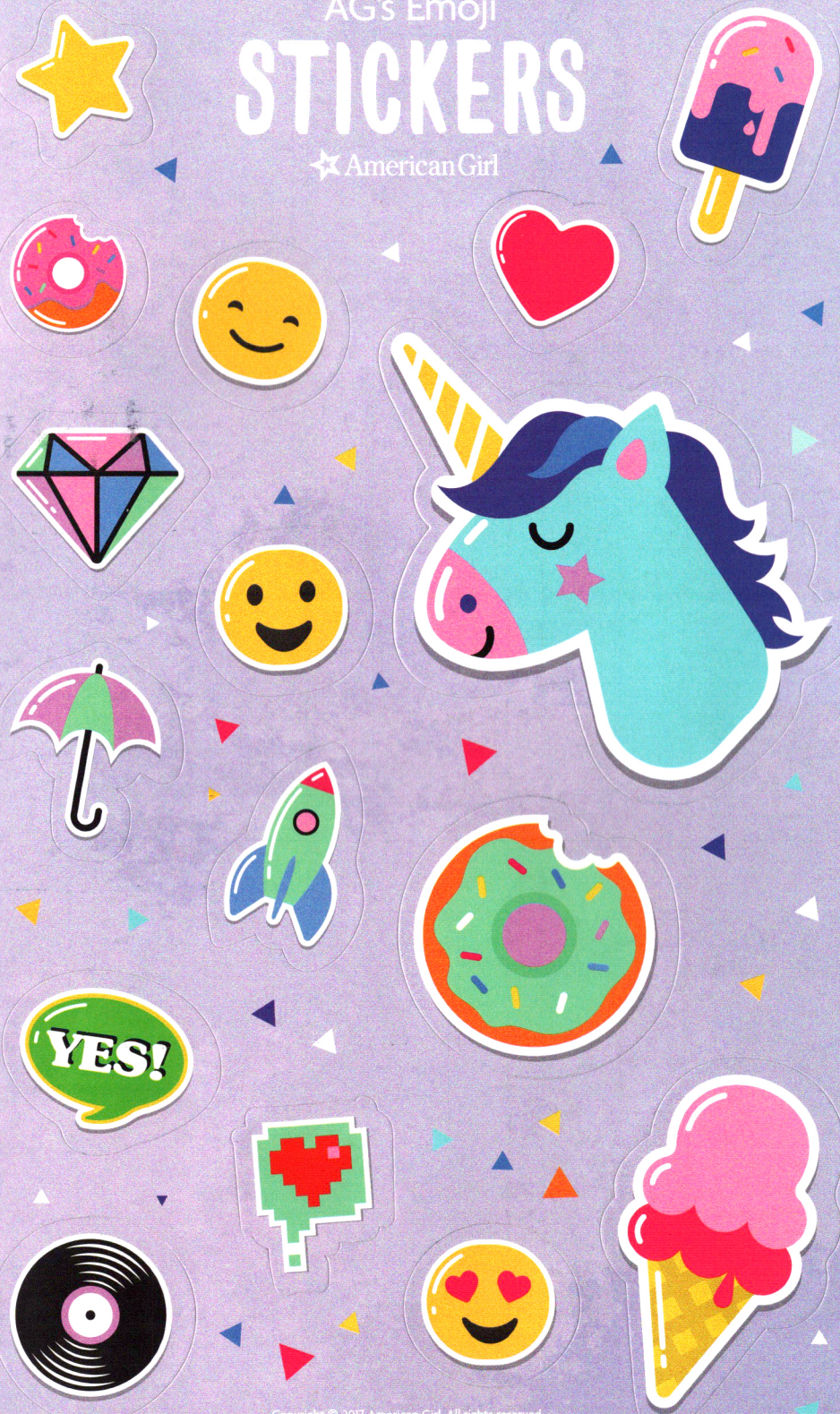
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